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No calories in Eden...p.13

63rd year of publication

Wanted: local, sustainable food production

Nova Scotia conference asks questions about the future of farming

Hand planting vegetables was one of the experiences available to those who attended the New Farmers Conference. In the background are two canvas meeting yurts, one of Lorax Farm's four houses, and a row of temporary outhouses.

Anne van Arragon Hutten

ANNAPOLIS VALLEY, NS – What is the future of farming, in Nova Scotia and beyond? How do we ensure that our food supply is safe to eat, and ethically produced with sustainable production methods? How does a young person with no farm background get into farming?

These questions, and many more, were the basis for long discussions at the second annual New Farmers Gathering held on a cooperative farm just south of Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley June 12-14, 2009. Lorax Woodlands was the perfect spot to host this event, which drew an estimated two hundred people. The farm was bought some years ago by someone who wanted to preserve the land in its current state, with three or four tenant farmers working collectively to produce organic food.

Interestingly, many of those who attended the event lacked any farm background. They came because they are concerned about their food supply, and because they favour small family farms which meet the sustainability criteria. In fact, the group's website described the event as an "alternative conference for farmers, those who want to be, and the friends and supporters of agricultural renewal." Many were young parents, twenty- and thirty-something, often with babies wrapped in slings. In fact, it would not have been difficult to picture this event as taking place during the sixties or seventies, when American draft dodgers moved to Canada to found communes where they would live in peace and brotherhood.

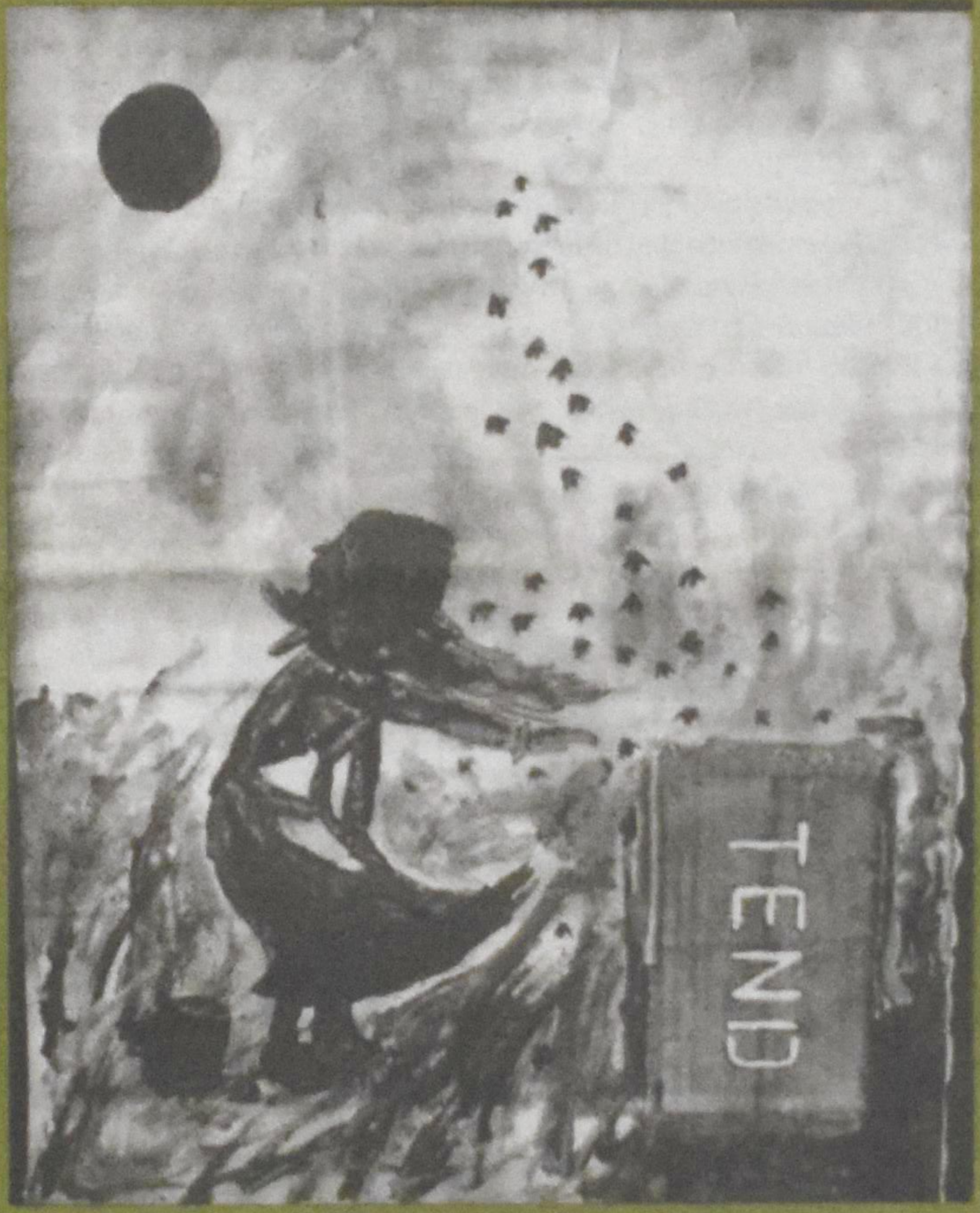
That exact comparison was made by one person questioning the speaker of the moment, an older farmer who gave practical, no-nonsense advice about farming. "Where did all those hippies with their idealism go?" someone asked, and his response was that they smoked too much pot and didn't have much notion of farm work, and therefore were unable to continue their chosen lifestyle.

Why 'new' is necessary

It would be easy to dismiss this current crowd as also having unrealistic expectations and dreams, but as their website says, alternative thinking about farming is now reaching critical mass in the Maritimes. "Small" and "local" are two key words in the renewed

See **Food production** *on p.2*

Theme issue: Food



Tend – mixed media with molasses paint, by Meredith Kathryn-Cove Gipson Hoogendam

Level grounds: BC company takes fair trade further

Farmer picking ripe coffee cherries.

Stephanie Tombari

DUNCAN, BC – When Dick Nagtegaal sips his morning coffee he dreams of the good old days – when the mantis was a pesticide, food came straight from a field, and an honest, hard-working farmer could make a fair living. It is a dream rarely realized by many small scale coffee growers in Africa – that is, until the Relationship Coffee Company started brewing.

"We are very passionate about coffee," says Nagtegaal, director of the Relationship Coffee Company, a unique fair trade partnership based in Duncan, B.C. "For me there is something very satisfying about being able to trust people – rather than corporations."

The Relationship Coffee Company works directly with Nine Highland Cooperative Coffee Farmers Association (NIHACOFA) in Uganda to produce hand-harvested, all natural coffee beans that not only earn organic certification, but help farmers earn a fair wage. Buying "fair trade" has become increasingly popular with both social justice advocates and consumers in recent years, but while fair trade standardizes the price for green coffee beans to ensure farmers are paid a sustainable wage for their crops, direct trade takes "fairness" one step further by including the farmers in the business from start to finish. Direct trade is fair trade in the raw – no middle person, no chemicals, and more importantly, no exploitation of farmers who labour for our daily cup o' joe.

"Relationship coffee is based on layers of trust," explains Nagtegaal. "We travel to where the coffee is grown and build relationships directly with the farmer. That allows us to ensure the highest quality coffee and provide sustainable income directly to the farmers

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News

Food production *continued from p.1*

interest on where food comes from, and there are many highly intelligent, well educated people working towards a new form of agriculture. Sales at farmers' markets are exploding everywhere; the Halifax City Farmers' Market, which is the largest in the Maritimes, is currently considering a move to a new $16 million "green" facility.

Workshops at the Gathering dealt with such practical topics as chicken killing, horse farming, home dairying and the weekend-long construction of a clay bread oven. These are not topics that would interest the bulk of North America's big farmers, but then, many at the conference have long ago concluded that modern commercial farming methods are "evil" and "sick." A new way of producing food is being called for.

My son, Ted, who was keynote speaker on the day I attended, is one of very few young farmers in the province who actually make a living from fruits and vegetables on a limited acreage. He explained that he has done this by choosing to sell at retail only, primarily at the Halifax market. Ted made no bones about the fact that he often works eighty-hour weeks, and that it's hard to find sufficient time for his young family. On the other hand, he is actually surviving without running a heavy debt load. In fact, he said, he normally makes a practice of saving up for what he wants, doing without until he has the money for new equipment.

In other words, Ted cut through some of the more idealistic talk about living off the land, suggesting that he sees his work as a business that needs to provide a living for the family. After the age of twenty, he said, you can't just live on love; you also have to pay the bills. He answered many questions about his actual farming practices. For instance, he explained that he cooperates with another farmer two or three miles away. Ted gets the use of some sandy land for earlier spring planting, and annual applications of cattle manure on the heavy clay soil of the home farm; the other farmer uses some of Ted's land rent-free for production of legumes. This in turn provides added nutrition to the soil here and provides for crop rotation. Much interest was shown in Ted's effort to use no harmful chemical sprays on vegetable crops, but he conceded that he grows the bulk of his apples conventionally. Until now, efforts with unsprayed orchard have yielded unsatisfactory yields and some quality issues.

Apprenticeships needed

Questions addressed to various speakers focused on such practical issues as how to obtain training if one wants to farm. One speaker, an older farmer, suggested that a person needs to talk to other farmers and ask for advice and help. Ted used the example of the WWOOFER movement (Willing Workers On Organic Farms), which can serve as a useful apprenticing program. He cautioned, however, that the program must be of benefit both to the host farmer and to the trainee. The farmer expects to receive help with farm work in return for training, room and board, and perhaps a small stipend. The trainee, Ted said, ought to be learning a variety of farm skills, something that won't necessarily happen if they are expected to just pick beans in the hot sun for long days.

We are calling for a new way of producing food.

Conference organizers' emphasis on care for the natural environment was expressed in the low-tech use of tents for those who stayed the whole weekend, a row of outhouses built out of rough lumber, and a buffet lunch whose ingredients were locally sourced from organic producers. Land was being plowed with a horse, and people were asked to pitch in with hand planting crops like potatoes and squash. The information booth was a rough farm outbuilding with only a few brochures on building with natural materials, beekeeping, and other workshops available at one farm.

Political allies?

Among the many young people was an older couple who turned out to be Peggy Hope-Simpson and her husband. Peggy is well known around here for her decades of work as a peace activist, interest in the environment and NDP candidacy (the recent provincial turnover to an NDP government came too late to include her).

In conversation, Peggy raised the question of how young people can find the money and land to begin farming. She envisions government monitoring farms that come up for sale, in an effort to help young people get started.

"If a five hundred acre farm comes up for sale, can we break that up into smaller tracts; would we be allowed to break it up into fifty acres," she asks. "We need to have this facilitated. Government has to get involved and make this possible." Issues of preservation of farm land have come under much discussion at the political level in Nova Scotia, and there's a development ban on such land in highly productive Kings County. Unfortunately the rules are too often ignored or challenged.

The New Farmers Gathering was an extension of the massive interest shown in local and sustainable food production of recent years. As one speaker pointed out, growing food in the Annapolis Valley, shipping it to a central depot in New Brunswick, then shipping it back to the Valley for consumption makes no sense. David Greenberg, the main conference organizer and one of four tenant farmers at Lorax, spoke of practising good stewardship of creation. Although he used no overtly Christian terminology, his sentiments could equally have been expressed at a meeting of the Christian Farmers Federation.

Marginal movement has broad appeal

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), also discussed at the conference, is becoming increasingly popular among urbanites who want to buy local. Paying up front, they receive boxes of whatever food is in season throughout the year. Ted initiated his own version some fifteen years ago with computer-printed "Hutten Bucks," where the customer buys multiples of $100 in early spring at a discount. This helps Ted pay the bills during the expensive planting season, and also provides a real relationship with those who eat the food he produces. Programs like this allow apartment and condo dwellers to support the concept of local food even if they're unable to plant a garden themselves.

Some of the movement towards a healthier and more sustainable food supply is driven by idealism and sometimes unrealistic expectations, but as with women's suffrage, to use but one example, it has often been a fringe movement which effected major societal change. Certainly it is true that our current method of growing food with massive chemical inputs, irrigating with increasingly scarce water, and shipping the product around the world using fossil fuels cannot continue. Support for local food production is growing because it's just common sense. It ties into very real concerns about the environment, about human health, about justice for farmers and farm employees. Including a willingness to eat root vegetables and kale during Canada's cold winters, this movement is fast beginning to go mainstream.

Anne van Arragon Hutten is a writer and mostly retired farmer near Kentville, Nova Scotia.

Level grounds *continued from p.1*

and their families."

"The price paid by fair trade for coffee guarantees a minimum price that represents the cost of production in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way, while still ensuring that the producer gets enough money to meet a satisfactory standard of living," he continues. "On top of this price, fair trade buyers also pay a premium that goes into local funds to pay for development projects that will benefit the local community."

Successful venture

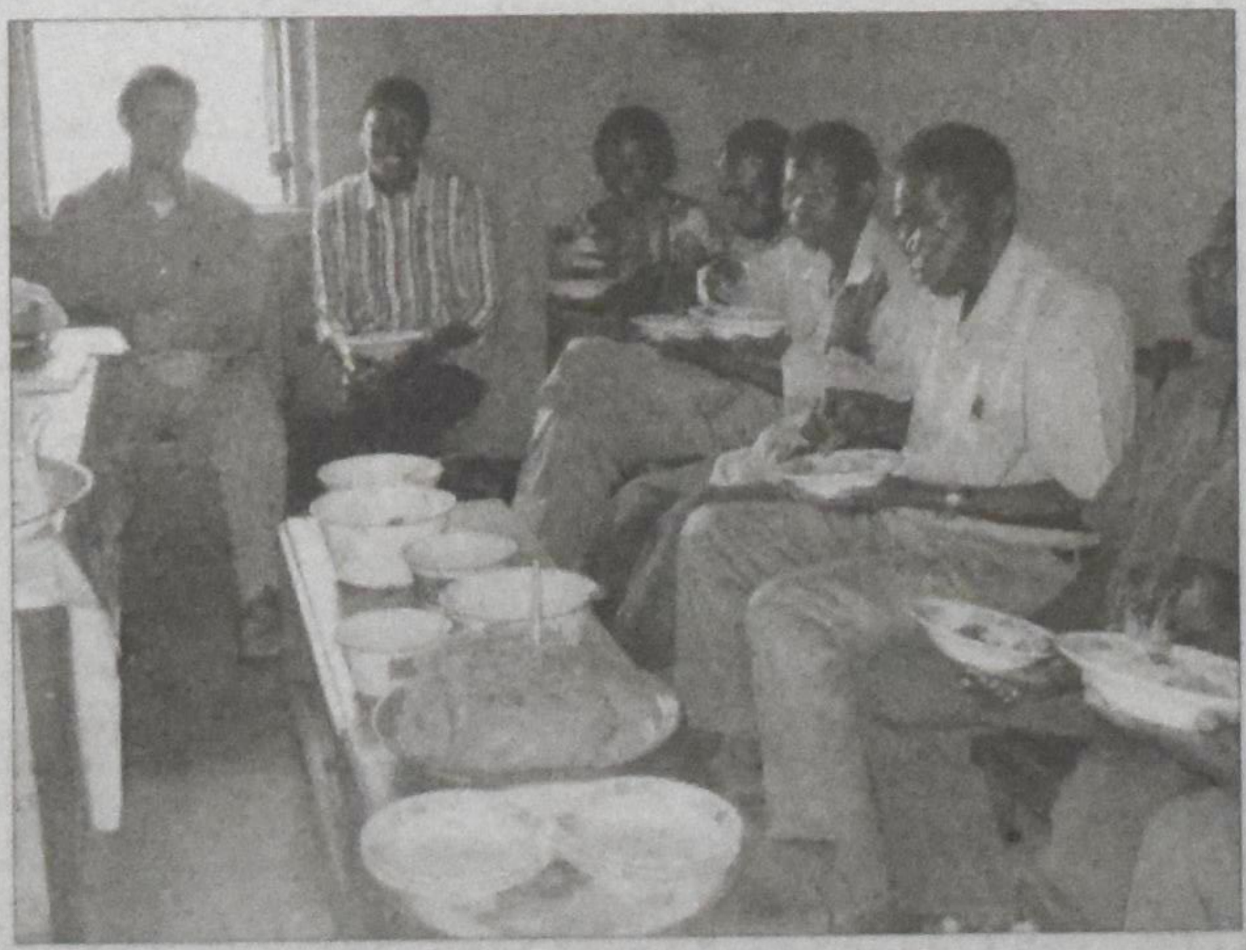
Since June 2008, Relationship Coffee Company has imported and distributed 7000 lbs of green coffee beans to churches in Alberta and B.C., sending all profits – nearly $17,000 – to the farmers in Uganda. That kind of money's no hill of beans: 650 Ugandan coffee growers have seen a boost to their annual income by a whopping 250 percent.

While the company was founded on coffee, it is already branching out to include other foods typically exploited in the free market. "We started with coffee farmers in the Nebbi District in Northern Uganda, but have now expanded to small scale sugarcane farmers and vanilla bean farmers in Uganda, coffee and tea farmers in Rwanda, tea farmers in South Africa, coffee farmers in Ethiopia and Tanzania," says Nagtegaal, who says the company has plans to start distributing coffee in Ontario this year. "We are hoping to continue to expand to small scale cocoa farmers in Ghana and coffee farmers in the Congo."

Though the Relationship Coffee Company is built on the principle of fair pay for a hard day's work, Nagtegaal assures that God has been the architect behind the company's success: "We want to model the process after the description of the body of Christ in I Corinthians 12:12-26: 'For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body.'"

Stephanie Tombari is a freelance writer specializing in social justice issues. She is also senior writer for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

Farmer working the ground to plant new coffee bushes.



Meeting of the Coffee Cooperative executive.

Seasonal recipes

Paying attention to the seasons is at the heart of a return to sustainable eating. With that in mind, I've chosen a few recipes that take us through the bountiful summer months and into early fall. For an excellent starting point, check out *Simply in Season*, a cookbook put out by the Mennonite Central Committee, companion to the widely popular *More with Less*. – AR-B

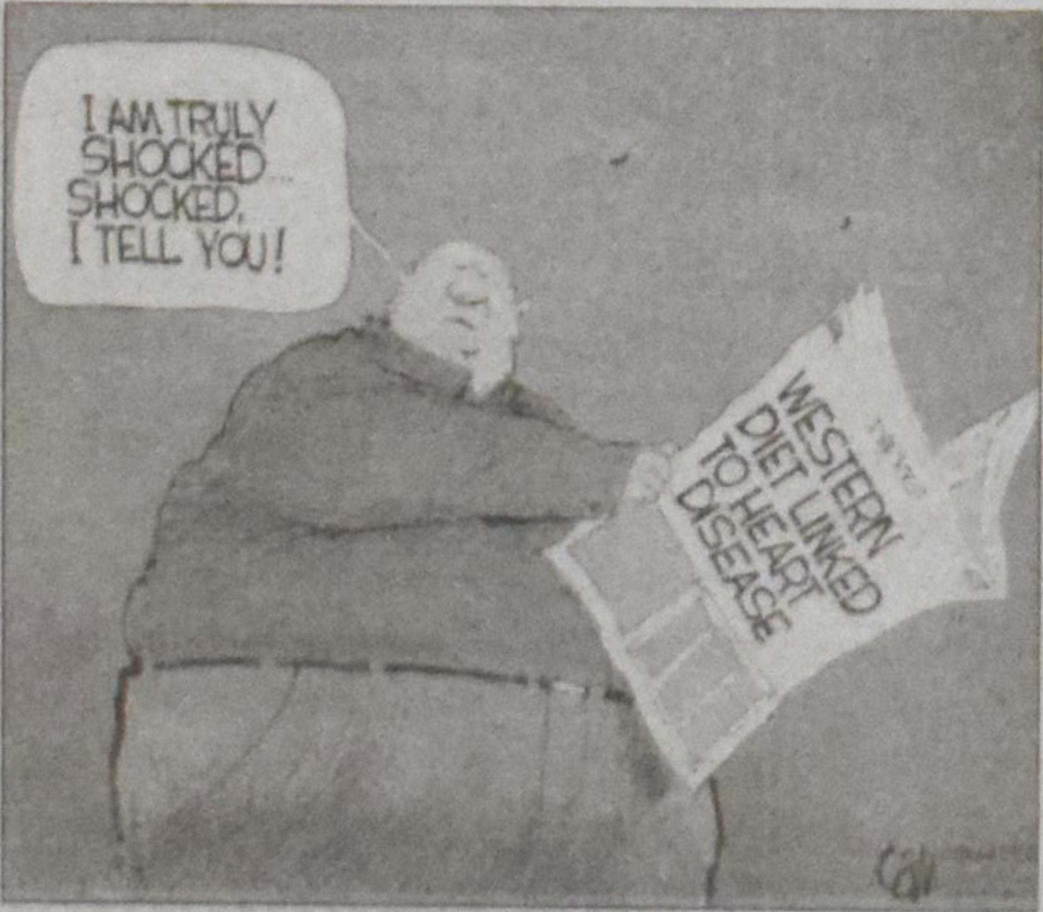
Raspberry chicken (July)

4 whole chicken breasts
2 Tbsp flour
Coat chicken with flour.
2 ½ Tbsp butter
Melt butter in a large skillet. Brown chicken, turning once.
6 Tbsp raspberry vinegar
½ to ¾ cup chicken broth
Add vinegar and broth to skillet; stir over low heat until combined. Simmer, uncovered, until the chicken is done (12-15 minutes). Remove chicken and keep warm.
½ cup heavy cream
Add cream to skillet; boil sauce until slightly thickened (about 10 minutes), stirring occasionally. Pour sauce over chicken, and serve.
Fresh raspberries to garnish (optional).

Fresh summer salsa (August)

6 medium fresh tomatoes, diced
1 medium red onion, diced
1 large green pepper, diced
2-3 hot chilli peppers, diced
¼ bunch fresh cilantro, chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced
3 Tbsp fresh basil, chopped
2 Tbsp vinegar
1 Tbsp lemon juice
½ tsp salt
Combine in a bowl. Let stand 30 minutes and serve.

(Simply in Season)



'That's okay; I make lamb'

Principalities & Powers
David T. Koyzis

Since it was first released in 2002, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* has become one of our family's favourite movies. Toula Portokalos' family reminds me very much of my own, and I came away with the conviction that her father Gus was patterned after my own dad. Of course, one of the major themes of the film is food. "Niko! Don't play with the food! When I was your age, we didn't have food!" warns mother Maria.

In the culture clash between Toula's large family and Ian Miller's bemused Anglo parents, food plays a pivotal role, from the misunderstood bundt cake to the gallons of *ouzo* poured into the Millers' unprepared gullets. Aunt Voula is shocked at Ian's professed vegetarianism: "What do you mean he don't eat no meat?" followed by a reassuring: "that's okay; I make lamb."

Because I grew up eating the hellenic cuisine of my father's native Cyprus, I could readily identify with the young Toula's *moussaka* ("Moose kaka?") packed in her school lunch box. A special treat was the huge paschal dinner prepared by my aunt for Greek Easter, which usually falls on a different day from western Easter.

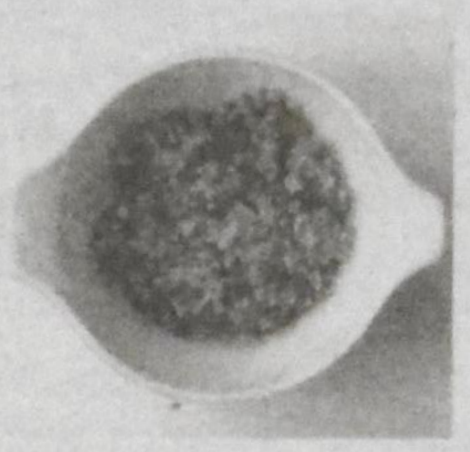
Historic importance

We know from experience and from Scripture that meals have a special role to play in the life of a community. From the time of Moses the Passover was shared by the covenant people to commemorate God's faithfulness in liberating them from Egyptian slavery (Exodus 12). Jesus ate a last meal with his disciples before his crucifixion and resurrection (Matthew 26), as portrayed in numerous works of art through the millen-nia. One of the metaphors for the coming kingdom of God is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). In the Christian church the Lord's Supper, variously called Communion and Eucharist, is a sacrament of God's grace to the communicants, assuring them of Christ's saving presence among them.

Given the historic significance of shared meals, it is not surprising that ethnic communities find in their unique cuisines a mark of national solidarity. Cyprus boasts a delicious cheese made from sheep milk called *halloumi*, which is nearly unique among cheeses for not melting when exposed to heat and is thus often eaten grilled. One of my aunt's best dishes is *dolmadhes*, the stuffed grape vine leaves known as *koupepkia* in Cyprus.

It wasn't until well into adulthood that I discovered a delicious irony in this Greek pride in their apparently matchless cuisine: much of it is also shared with the Turks! *Dolmadhes* comes from the Turkish word *dolmak*, meaning "to stuff." *Halloumi* is called *hellim* by the Turks. Traditional pastries from *baklava* and *kataïfi* are common to Greeks and Turks alike. Greek coffee, known as *kafes ellinikos*, is elsewhere called *kafes tourkikos*, Turkish coffee. As it turns out, these historic opponents manage to eat most of the same foods, calling them (in some cases) by different names, and claiming them as their own unique heritage.

Rather than end this column with something witty or wise, I shall instead offer a family recipe that one would never find in a commercial Greek cookbook. It is peasant fare that would more than please Ian Miller's vegetarian palate. Cypriots call it *moujendra*. Take the following ingredients:



- 1 cup dried green lentils
- 1 cup rice
- 2 to 3 bulb onions, depending on size
- 2 celery stalks
- salt
- pepper
- coriander
- olive oil (both pomace and extra virgin)
- 1 tbsp red wine vinegar

Place lentils in a pan of boiling water and cook until tender. About a teaspoon of salt should be added to water. This should take between 30 to 40 minutes. About ten minutes or so into the cooking of the lentils, add the rice. If using brown rice, start it first and add the lentils later. Longer cooking time will lead to a porridge-like mixture. Shorter cooking time will keep ingredients more *al dente*.

Chop onions and celery. In a separate shallow pan cover the bottom with the pomace olive oil and turn on heat. Add chopped onions and celery and sauté. Add pepper and coriander. Once this mixture has been sautéed sufficiently, add it to the lentils and rice. Mix and then add wine vinegar and extra virgin oil to taste.

Other ingredients can be added as well at various stages in the process, including chopped carrots, sliced kalamata olives, sun dried tomatoes or roma tomatoes. Feel free to experiment. That's what peasant cuisine is all about.

Extra virgin olive oil comes from the first pressing of the olives. Thus it is the richest grade of oil and the deepest in colour. Pomace oil comes from the later pressings and is quite adequate for cooking.

Kali oreksi! Or as the Dutch say, *Eet smakelijk*!

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and has considerable pride in his own Franco-Greek-Cypriot-Finno-Anglo-American-Canadian roots.

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Editorial

Nobody here but us chickens

Angela Reitsma Bick

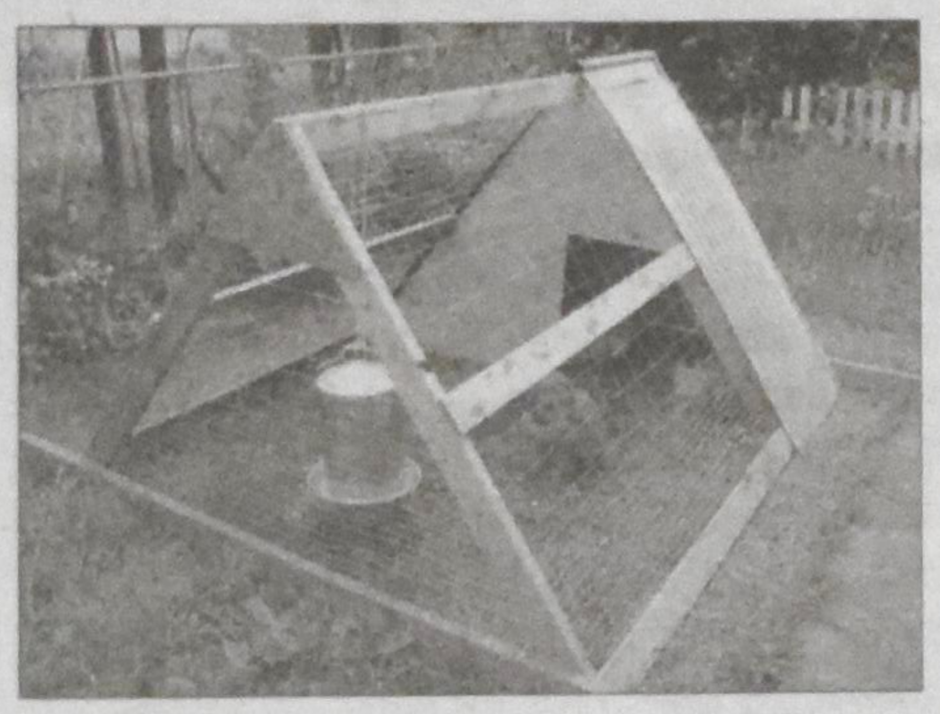
Long ago, when – as they say – chickens had teeth, everyone had chickens. We lived closely enough with these birds to borrow their characteristics for describing ourselves. Today, even though a city kid might have a hard time connecting the dots between talking chickens in her picture books, chopped up boneless/skinless chicken chunks, and a carton of eggs, the words remain. If you call someone hen-pecked, a bird-brain, a mother hen or madder than a wet hen, you're revivifying a time when every listener was familiar with the pecking order in barnyards (not just at work).

Belt-tightening across the board, combined with sustainable food initiatives, have made some cities re-think the laws that ban backyard poultry. Keeping urban chickens has many benefits: not only fresh eggs, but a source of free fertilizer, natural pest control, a way to get rid of table scraps and a lesson on where food comes from. Whether you grew up with chickens or have always wanted to try your hand at artfully scattering feed, you may get a chance – even in suburbia – to determine what really comes first, the chicken or the egg.

If you live in downtown Memphis, Seattle, Boston or New York, you can already keep a few chickens outside, collect the eggs and not worry about police. Cities in Montana, Maine, Michigan, Colorado and Ohio all passed laws in the past six months, making it legal to raise backyard chickens. If you're into suburban poultry in Canada, however, you'd better move to one of the few cities where it's legal – a rather short list which includes Guelph, Brampton, Niagara Falls and Vancouver.

Toronto considers changing laws

In June, Toronto's park and environment committee considered a pilot project that would allow residents to raise backyard chickens, providing their lots were adequate. Paula Fletcher, chair of the committee, says that despite the "issues surrounding chickens," "local food production and urban farming are priorities." Other cities have dealt with potential problems by limiting poultry husbandry to eggs, not meat, and by banning roosters. Toronto's city council will vote on the proposal in September. Meanwhile, journalists are plucking every possible pun out of the topic: "Vancouver hatches plan for backyard chickens" (CBC); "Toronto Chicken buck-buck-bucking for change" (*the Star*); even "Chicken coop for the soul" (*Globe and Mail*).



This home-built chicken tractor or "chicken ark" is a movable, floor-less chicken coop. The A-frame is light enough to pull around the yard.

Regardless of legality, the internet already offers a wealth of information on this age-old practise. In less time than it takes to dip a chicken into hot water and pluck it, you can read about predator-proof coops, whether nasal discharge is normal and how to discourage egg sucking. There's even (brace yourself) chicken forums and web cams spotlighting specific hens.

Right direction

Nonetheless, I think it's encouraging that so many US law-makers have taken steps to legalize urban and suburban chickens. It seems to me like one of those small, straightforward eco-things that we'd all better start doing sooner or later. Then, we can throw out ridiculous books like *Rooster's Birthday at the Beach* and maybe even learn a little by bird-watching again. There must be some reason why I shouldn't spend the egg money before the hen starts laying, but I can't for the life of me figure it out.

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Op-Ed Editor: Bert Witvoet **bert.witvoet@sympatico.ca**
News Editor: Angela Reitsma Bick **angela@christiancourier.ca**
Feature Editor: Brett Alan Dewing **brett@christiancourier.ca**
Circulation/Fam.ads: Rose der Nederlanden **rose@christiancourier.ca**
Admin/Bus.ads/Web: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer **ads@christiancourier.ca**

Church Page Editor: Marion Van Til **marianvantil@roadrunner.com**
Contributing Editor: Peter Schuurman **eternalstudent@sympatico.ca**

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Free to live meat-free?

Brett Alan Dewing

When we were brainstorming possible subjects for this food-themed issue, I realized that there was an ever-expanding list of "alternate food cultures" popping up across Canada. It seems that you can find any possible regimen: some people only eat fruit, others eat no vegetables. There are freegans, local food enthusiasts, raw foodies, organic followers, on and on.

But, of course, the most common variation on the theme is the ever-popular vegetarian/vegan. Though I don't believe I know a vegan, I do have several vegetarian friends. In fact, I helped create one once. In high school, one of my friends, known for his short-lived spontaneous whims, announced that he had decided to become a vegetarian. Let me clarify that he had no reason for making this drastic life change. It was simply one of his whims, and he admitted as such. I bet him a substantial amount of money that he could not keep up his hastily adopted vegetarianism for six months. Spurred on by the challenge, he collected the money and remains a vegetarian today, eleven years later.

When my university roommate announced that he was going veg, I felt the whole thing happening again. This time, I refrained from putting my money on the line. But I made it clear that I was not supportive of the decision.

That may surprise many people. In these times, vegetarianism is universally accepted without a thought. I, however, have never felt at ease with the idea of forsaking meat. Don't get me wrong, I don't think your spiritual health is dependant on what you eat. You can chow down on meat set before idols or only eat shrimp and never fear for your immortal soul. But I do wonder about the ethics of vegetarianism.

Many motivations, few reasons

Various people present various motivations for their choice of diet. Perhaps the most common is the old adage, "meat is murder." While I can understand the emotions associated with turning Bambi into brisket, I do not accept them as an appropriate reason to give up a major food group. What really confuses me about this train of thought is that so many only give up red meat. If cows don't deserve to be "murdered," than fish and fowl retain the same rights. For that matter, all fruits and vegetables are just as alive as the animals killed for food. If we aren't to kill for our meals, then we're stuck with chemically synthesized products. To me, it comes down to Scripture's repeated admonitions to "kill and eat" all types of animals.

These days, however, the most common reason people give me for their vegetarianism is land stewardship. Now this is a more complicated and worthy cause than squeamishness. We are entrusted with this earth and its creatures, and we have a very real onus to steward it well. This is both Biblical and ecological. But does eating meat really make poor use of our farmland?

The reasoning is that the produce grown to feed livestock for human consumption creates less foodstuff than if that produce were fed directly to people. Therefore, we waste corn and grains on livestock when we could be helping the world's hungry eat. But, in my opinion, this train of thought doesn't hold up.

First of all, comparing grain and beef is worse than comparing apples and oranges – it's like comparing apples and milk. Even if you eat that entire field of wheat yourself, you aren't getting the same nutritional material as you would from a steak. That's why dieticians recommend a balanced diet from all the food groups. Serious vegetarians supplement their intake with alternate sources of protein and other nutrients. I applaud that. If you're going to go veg, make sure you take care of yourself. But is the extra effort and vitamin swilling worth it?

Even if we used our fields to grow produce only for humans, where would that produce go? Even in this industrialized age, the earth produces enough food to feed its six billion inhabitants, but we, the stewards, distribute it unevenly. I doubt whether our increased grain production would do much of anything other than fill up more all-you-can-eat buffet lines in North America.

A disappointed host?

Regardless of the reasons one has for undertaking the vegetarian life, I can't help but wonder if – far from being good stewards – they are only turning away part of God's extravagant gift of life. I picture a Divine Host dishing out a lavish feast only to scrape mostly full plates after the party. Nowhere in Scripture is vegetarianism defended. Contrariwise, we are often encouraged to partake of the earth's abundance.

When it comes right down to it, anyone is welcome to dine how they wish. If someone feels a spiritual prodding to give up meat, I encourage them to do so. I also encourage everyone considering vegetarianism to pray about their decision and examine the real reasons for their choice. After all, we are stewards of our bodies and celebrants of God's good gifts. Let us eat, drink, and be merry!

At 500 John Calvin is still alive: *But well?*

Calvin surrounded by dissenters

Peter Schuurman

500th anniversaries are rare enough, but even this didn't inspire the crowds to attend a recent celebration of John Calvin's legacy at the University of Toronto this past June 18-20.

Bruce Adema, Canadian Ministry Director of the CRC, said that Reformed folk are reluctant to put too much focus on one person, especially someone caricatured to be "dour, emaciated, unsmiling, and wearing funny hats" like John Calvin. "Calvin is not important," he said, "but his legacy is."

It would certainly be ironic to idolize a man who spent much of his life denouncing Christian idolatries. Yet an interest in the history, heritage, and humanity of someone as influential as Calvin could prove to be a meaningful experience.

"We had hoped for twice as many people," said Peter Wyatt bluntly, former principal of Emmanuel College and lead organizer of the conference. "People are suspicious and unable to imagine that a historical figure might have something to offer to us today. This is why we entitled it "Re-discovering Calvin: Resources for Renewal Today."

Then Wyatt made a strong statement: "It indicates just how much Calvin's negative reputation in secular society has permeated the church."

The conference was a celebration of Calvin's legacy not only to the church but to music, literature, science, and economics. Initiated by the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies and Emmanuel College, the venue included some renowned scholars and some practical workshops. Covering everything from preaching to social justice, gender issues and ecology, the conference was a rich taste of Reformational life then and now. Attendance came mostly from members of the United, Presbyterian, and Christian Reformed churches in Canada.

Writer Marilynne Robinson, one of the plenary speakers, has suggested in one of her books that "cynicism has its proof texts." It is evident, she claims, that Calvin bears the brunt of our culture's most bitter offering of cynicism. "A figure of the greatest historical consequence, especially for our culture," she maintains, "is more or less entirely unread." Despite his profound influence "on our institutions, our very lives and souls," he has been effectively exorcised from view.

This conference was one small attempt to remedy this offense.

Calvin's music

Calvin Seerveld led off the conference with rich and moving presentation of the genius of Calvin's musicology, accompanied by a small but adaptable York University choir. Entitled "The Gift of Genevan Psalmody for Today Sprung from its Historical Context," it placed Calvin's music among the Latin hymns, the Mary-venerating songs and the Gregorian chants that marked the church up until that time. He explains the intent of Genevan psalms:

> The text should be intelligible to the people, in their own ordinary language; the sentences and phrases should be voiced in unison, so the worded message will be communally audible and not be occluded by distracting harmonies and counterpoint demanding trained voices; the psalms must be cast in stanzas with rhymed lines to make them more rememberable. And the variety of text snug like a good globe and not be frivolous tunes, cheaply sentimental, raucous or slippery.

Seerveld also challenged the caricature of Genevan psalms as "austere" by demonstrating the "lively and versatile" nature of some of the tunes, including "the boisterous, Jewish rough-hewn exuberance" of Psalm 47. Contrary to popular opinion, Calvin did also enjoy polyphonic, harmonic psalm singing – only he assigned it to the home, for parties and for civic events.

His deep concern was for the "non-elite *laos*, the ordinary 'folk' Jesus specially loved" and his goal was "to outfit the 'body of Christ' as a believing lay community for bringing redemptive action out in to the fields of artistry, political and economic just-doing." Singing about God's saving acts was molding members for mission.

The presentation reminded me of my Oma (grandmother) washing the dishes and singing Genevan Psalms. That a woman without much formal education could have large sections of the Bible in her head, have all the various melodies memorized, and have the music of Scripture inspire her work, is in many ways a testimony to the dreams of this Reformer.

Calvin's theology

Theologian and chemist Alister McGrath flew in from Oxford to offer a summary of Calvin's theological legacy. He credited Calvin and his definition of church as "word and sacrament" as opening up "entrepreneurial space" for individuals to move the Christian faith in new directions. Placing the Bible in the centre of church authority, however, also opened up a new dilemma: how can it have authority when it is subject to its interpreters? Does this not open the door to an explosion of heresy?

Calvin's birthplace in Noyen, France

Calvin's answer was his *Institutes of Christian Religion* – intended an interpretive key to the Scriptures. Since Calvin did not have the prescribed ecclesiastical training, on what authority does his book stand? McGrath's answer: its own clarity, conciseness, and persuasiveness.

McGrath ended by summarizing the legacy of Calvin – "one of the most interesting and pivotal figures in world history." First of all, he facilitated a shift from an institutional to a theological understanding of church – a sort of "ecclesiastical minimalism" that is

See **Calvin** *on p.9*

Greens with blueberries, feta and almonds (August)

2 Tbsp olive oil
1 Tbsp white balsamic vinegar
½ tsp mustard
pinch each salt and pepper
Whisk together oil, vinegar, mustard, salt and pepper in a large bowl.
8 cups mixed greens
Toss the salad with dressing until coated. Divide the salad among plates.
½ cup fresh blueberries
½ cup feta cheese, crumbled
¼ cup almonds, sliced and toasted
Sprinkle berries, cheese and almonds over each plate, and serve.

(Market Fresh)

Gazpacho (August)

2-3 tomatoes
½ green pepper
1 stalk celery
½ cucumber
½ small onion
Finely chop all the vegetables.
2 tsp. parsley, snipped
1 small garlic clove, minced
3 Tbsp wine vinegar
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 tsp salt
¼ tsp freshly ground pepper
½ tsp Worchestershire sauce
3 cups tomato juice
Mix all ingredients in a large bowl. Chill.
Serve as an appetizer or cold soup.

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News

Belhar: The legacy of Synod 2009

Kathy Vandergrift

Synod 2009 for the Christian Reformed Church of North America will be remembered for the stomach flu virus that struck about a third of the participants. Caring for one another took on a whole new meaning this year.

Canadians will remember that a Canadian, Rev. William Koopmans of Chatham, Ontario, was elected Chairperson for the first time in fifty years. Rev. Sheila Holmes, Vice-Chair, is the first black American woman pastor to serve on the executive of Synod. While the growing diversity within the CRC was celebrated with the theme of Unity in Diversity, numerous questions arose about full acceptance of persons who come into our church from less familiar backgrounds. It takes much more than singing songs in different languages to achieve the goal of inclusivity, but progress is being made.

Most of all, Synod 2009 may be remembered for adopting the Belhar Confession as our fourth confession. As a delegate, it was a privilege to serve on the advisory committee that studied this matter. Before us was a recommendation from the standing Interchurch Relations Committee that the CRC take the first step toward adoption of the Belhar Confession as its fourth confession.

Historic opportunity

We do not adopt new confessions very often – not one in the last 400 years, in fact. Even the beloved testimony "Our World Belongs to God" does not have the status of a confession. That meant there were two questions under debate at Synod.

First was the content of the Belhar Confession. Second was whether it should be a confession or a lesser declaration of some kind. In the end, Synod 2009 decided on confessional status. That decision will be ratified in 2012 after three years of "trying it on," as some delegates said. Synod also approved sending three explanatory documents to the churches with the Belhar Confession, for reflection before 2012.

What happens in the next three years will be important for the CRC more than for the Belhar Confession. Let me explain.

The Belhar Confession comes as a gift from the Uniting Reformed Churches of South Africa. Like all confessions, it was birthed in a time of crisis during the apartheid era. Scripture was being used to justify oppression of one race by another, also within the Reformed church. The Belhar Confession confronted this heresy by declaring racism and injustice to be contrary to Scripture. Several delegates highlighted that Belhar is relevant for us because slavery and racism are part of our history and culture in the US and Canada. We too need the Belhar Confession.

The gift in the Belhar Confession is its focus on justice and reconciliation between peoples as central to the gospel message. These themes do not receive much attention in earlier creeds. What do we do with a gift that challenges us and opens up sore spots in our own practice in the US and Canada?

Looking ahead

No one is saying that Belhar contradicts Scripture. There are disagreements about emphasis, language use, and possible misinterpretations. The next three years will see heated debates on the fine points of the Belhar Confession.

My prayer is that the CRC in Canada and the US will use this gift to develop a rich grounding in Biblical teachings about justice and what they mean for us. Justice is a central theme in Scripture, but not well developed in our church discourse, theological writings, sermons, or worship resources. Working for justice in society is widely viewed as an optional add-on or a hobby for a few people. The Belhar's call to justice is blunt and sharp; we need to work out what Biblical justice means in our context. If we do that, the Belhar gift will change us and stimulate a new sense of our mission in our cultural context.

Secondly, a new look at all our confessions is valuable. The dominant questions were why we need a new one, whether Belhar has enough quality, and fear of opening the door to new confessions. My question is why it has taken 400 years to consider a new one?

Confessions relate Scripture to the challenges of each age, as well as to our historical roots. We need to grapple with new confessions because God's work in history continues to unfold. We face new challenges as Reformed Christians in the 21st century. Rather than being fearful and stuck in our past, I hope we have the confidence to expand our understanding of what the Bible teaches for our age. This could be a rich moment in CRC history.

By 2012, I hope we embrace the Belhar Confession, develop a deeper understanding of Biblical teachings on justice in our own context, and live a renewed commitment to be God's agents of justice and reconciliation in the world of 2012 and beyond.

Kathy Vandergrift attended Synod as a delegate from Classis Eastern Canada. She also participated in an earlier Roundtable on the Belhar Confession.

(See related article on p.10)

Counting blueberries

My wife loves blueberries. When we can't get fresh picked ones from growers in our area, she'll buy the little plastic packages of imported ones. She eats them raw or adds them to fruit desserts.

A few weeks ago, when I was unpacking the groceries, a package of blueberries fell off the counter and spilled onto the floor. I grabbed a small bowl and put the berries in the bowl and was astonished that the bottom was barely covered. I noticed that the top of the container is wider than the bottom.

Boy, that's clever packaging I thought. They make it look as if you're getting a good amount of the little berries for $2.99 to $3.99.

I wondered how many berries are in a package? I counted them. Only 84. Four were rotten. Three were shriveled up and six were very small. I thought all the berries were rather small looking – no marble-sized ones.

The other day we bought another package of blueberries just to compare them. The net weight was 4.4 oz and I counted 86 berries. There were four over-ripe berries and nine very small ones. Let's see…how much is that per berry? It's 4 to 5-cents a berry if you don't count the bad ones. It's no wonder we sometimes pick our own at local blueberry farms or buy them at roadside stands.

Let's see…would blueberry pie be my favourite pie? Yes, I'd say it is. Now I'm not a big pie eater; I prefer a bowl of fruit for dessert. But blueberry pie is always good.

Blueberries are the fruit of a shrub that belong to the heath family, which includes the cranberry and bilberry as well as the azalea, mountain laurel and rhododendron. Blueberries grow in clusters and range in size from that of a small pea to a marble.

The booklet, *The World's Healthiest Foods: Feeling Great,* says blueberries are literally bursting with nutrients and flavour, yet very low in calories. Researchers at Tufts University analyzed 60 fruits and vegetables for their antioxidant capacity. Blueberries came out on top, rating highest in their capacity to destroy free radicals.

Wine, particularly red wine, is touted as cardioprotective since it is a good source of antioxidant anthocyanins. A recent study found blueberries deliver 38 per cent more of these free radical fighters. In this study, published in the August 2003 issue of the *Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry*, researchers found that a moderate drink (about 4 ounces) of white wine contained .47 mmol of free radical absorbing antioxidants, red wine provided 2.04 mmol, and a wine made from Highbush blueberries delivered 2.42 mmol of these protective plant compounds.

Cultivated blueberries are typically mildly sweet, while those that grow wild have a more tart and tangy flavour.

Did you know that eating preserved blueberries and bilberries improves night vision? During World War 11, British Royal Air Force pilots were given blueberry or bilberry preserves before night missions because the berries supposedly improved night vision. After the war, studies showed that the berry extracts do in fact improve nighttime sharpness, adjustment to darkness, and restoration of acuity after exposure to glare.

Blueberries are native to North America, where they grow throughout the woods and mountainous regions of Canada and the United States. This fruit is rarely found growing in Europe and has only been recently introduced in Australia.

There are approximately 30 different species of blueberries with different ones growing throughout various regions. For example, the Highbush variety can be found throughout the Eastern seaboard from Maine to Florida, the Lowbush variety throughout the Northeast and Eastern Canada, and the Evergreen variety throughout states in the Pacific Northwest.

While blueberries played an important role in North American Indian food culture, being an ingredient in pemmican, a traditional dish composed of the fruit and dried meat, they were not consumed in great amounts by the colonists until the mid-19th century. This seems to be related to the fact that people did not appreciate their tart flavour. Only when sugar became more widely available as a sweetener at this time did they become more popular.

Blueberries were not cultivated until the beginning of the 20th century, becoming commercially available in 1916.

Eating plenty of blueberries may significantly lessen brain damage from strokes and other neurological disorders, suggests a study published in the May 2005 issue of the Journal of Experimental Neurology.

Ripe blueberries should be stored in a covered container in the refrigerator where they will keep for about a week, although they will be freshest if consumed within a few days.

We're going to see if we can get a few bottles of that Highbush blueberry wine to share with some of our summer guests.

Maynard van der Galien (maynard@renfrew.net) farms in the Ottawa Valley near Renfrew, Ont. He writes weekly and monthly columns. He's done that for 21 years.

News

These banks are busier than ever:

Job losses in Canada lead to food bank line-ups

Salvation Army foodbank

Mariel Angus

As one of the richest countries in the world and a net exporter of food, most Canadians enjoy access to an abundance of fresh and nutritious food not found in many other parts of the world.

In midst of this tremendous wealth, it is scarcely believable that hunger still exists in our country today. And yet it does.

Last year, before the recession, approximately 700,000 Canadians made use of food banks in a typical month. When Canada first began to feel the impact of the recession this past fall, food bank use increased by ten percent. Since January, overall food bank use has risen by over 20 per cent, the highest jump in the past five years.

Across the country, the Salvation Army has reported that demand for their services – which includes food banks and shelters – is up 10-30 per cent in every province.

This increase is even greater in specific cities. Food bank use has risen 46 per cent in Thunder Bay since last year, while the Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank has reported a 70 per cent jump in people in need. Banks in Penticton, B.C. and North Bay, Ontario have also reported a 37 per cent increase in clients.

Hungrier than you think

Mel Boutilier, the Executive Director of the Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank in Halifax, has been witnessing firsthand the growing need for food. Parker Street serves an average of 250 families a week, and is seeing more and more clients who have recently lost their jobs.

"We used to think that people who came into food banks were people without skills or education, or maybe who didn't want to work," says Boutilier, "but people are now coming [who have] university degrees."

When visiting the food bank for the first time, a recently unemployed man confessed to Boutilier, "I'm embarrassed to be here – but I have children, and no food, and I had to ask for help."

Many Canadians are experiencing hunger for the first time, and there are still thousands who were already experiencing it before the recession hit. While food banks, school breakfast programs and other food support programs provide crucial assistance for those struggling with hunger, they are not enough to address the problem of food insecurity.

Food insecurity is a symptom of poverty, directly correlated with insufficient income. Social assistance and disability support rates in Canada are too low for the large majority of recipients to afford nutritious meals in addition to rent, utilities and other basic costs of living. As a result, a 2008 survey found that 51 per cent of food bank users received social assistance, and 13 per cent are people on disability support.

Even those who are employed may find it hard to pay for a full grocery cart: lack of a living minimum wage, no affordable housing and no adequate childcare services contribute to the lack of sufficient income. Consequently, the percentage of working poor who use food banks has more than doubled in the past twenty years, from 6 per cent in 1989 to 14.5 per cent in 2008.

Impact on Canada

The limited accessibility of employment insurance during this recession will only increase the likelihood that Canadian families will have to turn to food banks for help.

Further, the relationship between poverty and poor health has been well documented. A significant cause of poor health among low-income people is the inability to afford nutritious food. By contributing to poor health, hunger negatively impacts all of society in the form of higher health care and social service costs.

With hunger and food insecurity already prevalent among low-income populations in Canada, and food prices rising and unemployment increasing, we are, unfortunately, likely to see a continued rise in demand for food banks over the coming months.

Churches and faith communities across the country continue to play a critical role in easing hunger through front-line work with those living in poverty, demonstrating love for our neighbours. But we must also make structural changes within our society if hunger is to be truly eliminated.

Our country has the resources to end hunger; what we need is the political willpower to do so. As citizens and church communities, we must call on our governments to take action to ensure that no one in Canada continues to needlessly suffer from food and income insecurity. We need an economy of care that provides workers with sufficient wages to meet their basic needs, and also provides adequate support for those not employed in order to ensure that every person in Canada can live free of hunger.

Mariel Angus is the policy intern at Citizens for Public Justice.

From the Lab

Rudy Eikelboom

Food and obesity I: Fasting

When was the last time you fasted? If my personal experience and observation are any indication, fasting is pretty uncommon in Reformed circles. Most of us agree with the early Christian church that this and other dietary practices required by Old Testament law are no longer required for Christians liberated in Christ. But it might be time for us to reinstate this ancient practice, one still common in other branches of Christianity.

Many Scripture references suggest that fasting is beneficial for our spiritual life and can lead us to a closer walk with our Lord. Both Matthew 6:16+ and Mark 2:18+ imply that Christians should fast and that God will reward this discipline. But fasting may benefit our physical health as well. It has been suggested that the Old Testament dietary laws governing what could and could not be eaten, by whom, and when, have a sound biological basis; they are good for us. Regular fasting may be one way to address the obesity that is more and more a problem in North America.

In 2004, nearly one quarter of Canadians and just below 30 per cent of Americans were obese, defined as having a Body Mass Index* of over 30. It appears that these percentages are going up. In North America we have been blessed by a readily available abundance of food, and few of us ever go to bed hungry. However, a consequence of this abundance and our lifestyle is an increasing rate of obesity and resulting medical problems.

The solution to obesity – eat less and exercise more – is simple, but few of us are able to implement it effectively. Many, many individuals have struggled long and hard to reduce their weight using a variety of methods, but, over the longer term, the weight almost always creeps back. Losing weight is a major triumph of will power, requiring sustained commitment to a plan, but it is almost a minor miracle if two years later the weight has not been regained.

Other factors

Obesity is sometimes discussed as a failure of will power; gluttony is often listed as one of the seven deadly sins, suggesting that the obese are guilty of a moral breakdown. Research looking at weight regulation tells us that this is not a helpful way to think about this problem. Obesity does not necessarily imply the individual overate; in fact, our difference in body weight may have a large genetic component. Our bodies have many biological systems that control our food intake and in most situations make sure we remain healthy. Hunger mechanisms activate if our body becomes short of necessary nutrients. We also have satiety mechanisms to tell us when we have had enough: we all know that if we overeat celebrating our Lord's birthday, the discomfort can be very real. Hunger and satiety mechanisms are incredibly complex systems, and the number of control loops that regulate energy intake and expenditure still defy our understanding. From my research work with rats and parallel studies in humans I know that genetic differences, food type and availability, and physiological mechanisms are all involved in the maintenance of our bodies' weight.

There was a time when human bodies had to protect themselves against famine. When food was plentiful, it was important to prepare for any future famine by building energy reserves; these fat stores would increase a person's survival during a food shortage. The problem today is that many of us (hunger is still very real for some) have plentiful food, a wide variety, all year around, but rarely face a famine. So we over-consume but never face a shortage to use up the extra energy stores. Enter obesity and the associated medical problems.

Maybe we need to recreate some individual mini famines by fasting. As Reformed Christians we emphasize the unity of our spiritual and physical life; the suggestion that spirit and body are separate is foreign to us. In this light fasting might be one way to give a physical reality to this unity. That this practice might have both health and spiritual benefits for us is then not surprising.

I looked to find evidence that periodic fasting can help in weight regulation and the avoidance of obesity-related medical problems, but I found very little. Perhaps fasting is a research area that needs more exploration and a practice that we would be well advised to reconsider.

* BMI = Weight(kg)/[height x height(m)]

Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@wlu.ca) is a professor of psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University who has tried fasting only once.

News

Kairos calls for apocalyptic living

Hendrik Vlaar

Over the last two centuries, the Western World has made great strides in abolishing slavery, improving corporate treatment of the environment, putting an end to racism and creating a more materially equitable society – that is, depending on whose history you're reading.

If we take a realistic approach to today's domestic and global social realities, it is impossible to deny that for every justice-seeking step forward, our society has taken two or three steps back, much to the chagrin of the invisible Church.

Take, for example, the well-known and often quoted statistic that there are, globally, more slaves in bondage at this very moment than there were for the entire length of the American slave trade. The atrocities are of equal weight concerning humanity's treatment of the environment and each other – both here in Canada and abroad. One of the worst environmental and social injustices in the world involves the Canadian oil companies flooding the Northern Alberta watershed with toxins, which are the cause of lethal cancers responsible for killing members of the First Nations community in Fort Chipewyan.

Also suffering from abuse are the migrant workers employed on tar sand project sites. Enticed by the promise of Canadian capital, these workers are void of rights upon arrival, and coerced to labour under inhumane conditions leading to illness, exhaustion, and even death (there have been documented events, for example, of exhausted workers driving heavy equipment off high ledges to their demise).

Despite such human rights abuses, the use of unethically sourced fuels are woven so intricately into the fabric of society that it seems impossible – even for faithful followers of Christ – to do anything but comply and hope for better days. This problem is persistent in regards to all justice issues. There is one group of believers, however, who have taken up the holy commission to do justice, and to strive to see the realization of that justice today.

Persistently seeking justice

That group is KAIROS, and throughout the third week of June, the Canadian Ecumenical Justice organization conducted its first nation-wide gathering, hosting delegate members from all across the country and from all sectors of society. Since its inception in 1996, KAIROS has worked diligently to follow the biblical call to "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." Comprised of 11 different member churches, the organization is truly ecumenical, representing the full spectrum of Christian thought concerning what it means to "do justice." Fully aware of the social problems woven through the fabric of modern society, KAIROS calls for social change, and this recent gathering was a strengthening of that call throughout the entire KAIROS network.

Essential to the gathering was the presence of the multiple voices found within this country – many of which spend much of their time on the fringes of society. These include the disabled, First Peoples, youth, and the impoverished. In fact, including these voices gave the conference a more genuinely authentic feel, as the Church, while calling for justice, was forced to act justly within the immediate KAIROS community. This justice included observing the privilege of "dominant culture" Canadians to use land which traditionally belongs to this country's First Peoples (including the land upon which the university of Waterloo has been constructed). KAIROS members were welcomed to the land by friends belonging to First Peoples communities who patiently taught "dominant culture" Canadians about the sacredness of the land. This deepened and enriched the cause for environmental justice. The multiplicity of voices had similar effects on all ways of doing justice – from fair trade initiatives to First People's justice.

Indeed, the gathering focused not only on the encouragement and networking of KAIROS members, but also on fostering new ways of thinking to direct the new world order forming out the ashes of the present economical crisis. The gathering's title – "The End of the World as We Know It... Thank God!" – spoke to the apocalyptic nature of the crisis and the importance of living out of that reality. Living out of apocalypse, in fact, is exactly how justice is to be carried out, urged Ched Myers – one of the gathering's plenary speakers – for hidden within the word's meaning is a definite sense of the unmasking of history.

In apocalypse, then, the culture of injustice characteristic of modern society is revealed – or unveiled – so that reality is viewed from the standpoint of redemption, and from the perspective of the poor and marginalized. From such a perspective flows forth a new way of living that is inclusive towards all of creation. Buying fairly traded products, using renewable energy sources, and even actively advocating for justice are all included in this new way. An apocalyptic sense of justice sees the world as it should be – renewed by God – and strives to follow Jesus into the coming of the new creation. KAIROS, then, lives out of that apocalyptic view of the new world, unmasking the present order and leading the ecumenical charge, racing fervently towards redemption and the completed justice of God's New Creation.

Hendrik Vlaar, a student at Redeemer, has been to 12 different countries and worked in a children's hostel in India. He's passionate about Ecological and Aboriginal Justice, as well as food and water sovereignty. He hopes to be part of peace-building initiatives in the Middle East.

Israel: living under the threat of another holocaust?

Harry Antonides

Islam wishes to destroy all states and governments anywhere on the face of the earth which are opposed to the ideology and program of Islam regardless of the country or the nation which rules it.... [T]he objective of Islamic Jihad is to eliminate the rule of an un-Islamic system and establish in its stead an Islamic system of state rule. (Abul Ala Mawdudi, 1906-1979)

The Israel-Palestine conflict has endured ever since the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. No matter how well-intended the facilitators, including American presidents, were in their attempts to resolve the conflict between Israel and Palestine, all efforts to that end were dashed on the rock of one stubborn reality: *The Palestinian leaders, whatever they state publicly to the contrary, are convinced that the state of Israel is illegitimate and must be destroyed.*

No ordinary dispute

Efraim Karsh, in his *Islamic Imperialism: A History*, provides this insightful explanation:

In other words, the 'Question of Palestine' is neither an ordinary territorial dispute between two national movements nor a struggle by an indigenous population against a foreign occupier. It is a holy war by the worldwide Islamic umma to prevent the loss of a part of the House of Islam to the infidels. 'When our enemies usurp some Islamic lands, Jihad becomes a duty binding on all Muslims.' (p.214)

This is the reason why the 1993 Oslo accords went nowhere, and Yasser Arafat refused to accept the Camp David offer in 2000, despite the fact that he had obtained nearly every one of the Palestinian demands. He did not sign because peace would have legitimized the existence of Israel. In his own words: "We shall never commit a crime against them [future generations], the crime of permitting the existence of a racialist state in the heart of the Arab world." (p.180)

The Palestinian position could not be more bluntly explained than in that sentiment, repeated endlessly in all kinds of documents, sermons, on the airwaves, and even in school text books aimed at the very young. The Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmedinejad has spelled out this position so that no one can plead ignorance: "We will wipe Israel off the map."

There are many ways in which the deep-seated hatred for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel continues to thrive. Meanwhile, Western public opinion refuses to take seriously the religious fanaticism that feeds that hatred. Ironically, many blame Israel for the violence, and they want to use the unrelenting pressure of world opinion, now given added credence by President Obama, to force Israel into more concessions – including those that would result in its destruction.

The prospect of Iran becoming a nuclear power places Israel before a terrible dilemma. The West appears no longer serious about stopping Iran's nuclear ambitions. At the same time it demands that Israel treat its declared enemies as trustworthy negotiating partners.

The UN, in clear violation of is own founding document and led by a coalition of the Arab states, has consistently carried on a campaign of demonizing Israel as the worst human rights violator. This is despite the fact that Israel is the only law-based, democratic state in the Middle East where more than one million Arabs enjoy all the rights of citizenship, including the right to elect their own members in the Israeli parliament (Knesset).

Regrettably, the anti-Israel forces get a great deal of help from the mainstream Western media and academic world. The leaders of radical Islam and especially the Palestinians are masters at playing the western media and intelligentsia. So much so that when Israel in self-defence builds a protective wall, sets up check points, or takes military action, it invariably is accused of killing innocents and using disproportionate force. All the while Hamas and Hezbollah hide behind civilians from which to send their rockets and suicide bombers.

A few questions

What should Israel do? What should we do? We, that is, people of goodwill, who pray for the peace of Jerusalem and who wish nothing more fervently than that Israelis and Palestinians would live in freedom and peace alongside and with each other.

Once before, in the 1930s, the West misjudged the character of the Nazi murderers of the Jews. Had the leaders of the free world understood the truth, they might have prevented the destruction of Europe and the slaughter of six million Jews.

Unless we begin to realize that the ongoing attempts to construct the road map to peace are built on a lie – we will not make any progress in preventing a recurrence of the Holocaust.

May God have mercy on us all.

Harry Antonides (hantonides@sympatico.ca) lives in Toronto and is retired from his work with the CLAC.

News

Calvin 500 Conference *continued from p.5*

easily transplantable (and ultimately opens up space for something like Willow Creek!)

Secondly, Calvin opened up space for scientific exploration (McGrath is himself a PhD in both physics and theology). If there are two books of God's revelation, and creation is the first, it ought to be interpreted along the same lines as the Scriptures – i.e. on its own terms. Calvin thus allowed for the desacrilization of nature – which in turn gave permission to scientific exploration.

Calvin's character

Plenary speaker Marilynne Robinson is known for her Pulitzer Prize winning novel *Gilead*, a story of the theological struggles of a Calvinian Congregationalist pastor in Iowa. In a workshop she spoke of how the polemical view of Calvin has become the popular description – the money-grubbing, over-worked, sensuous-less Christian. She spoke of the legacy of Calvin in terms of the valuing of individual conscience, the founding of colleges and universities, a high view of the Bible (including the Old Testament!) and a championing of the sovereignty of God that has opened up study of the whole creation.

When asked if she thought Calvinism was spent, she responded by saying that the best of Calvin – his self-scrutiny and austerity – are needed more than ever today. "Our discomfort can offer others benevolence" she said. In a world that prizes "looking after yourself – which is really bad manners to say the least," the ethic of Calvin can bring much healing and grace.

Is there much hope for Calvin's Christian legacy? Judging from the conference, which was mostly an over-50 crowd, with just a handful of students in their twenties, the future is uncertain. The conference was certainly not an exercise in demonography, but neither was much hagiography in evidence. Luther got his movies because he is perceived as a courageous liberator, an individual defying the large institution. Calvin, more of a withdrawn pedagogue and scholarly institution builder, doesn't make good cinematography.

The most popular forms of Calvinism today – of the more "muscular" type – the Mark Driscoll and John Piper variety, were not represented in any of the offerings. Some representation from Rob Bell's Mars Hill was slated for one workshop as a consideration of the "emerging church" movement. Besides this, and John Suk's seminar on "Preaching to Postmoderns" – there was little focus on the younger generation. The one seminar where Calvinism seemed to be flourishing most was in the Korean urban church context.

This was in many ways a tri-denominational endeavour – the United Church, the Presbyterian Church, and the CRC, and the workshops reflected their people and their gifts. If the position of these three institutions is extremely vulnerable at this time, there may be something poetic in it. For Reformed churches were, from their beginning, minority communities under threat, and as Robinson said, "the volatility of the tradition is central to it." Calvin was an exile, a refugee from his homeland. To be Calvinian, among other things, is to be caught in the tensions of tumultuous times.

Peter Schuurman (eternalstudent@sympatico.ca) lives in Guelph, Ontario where he parents his two children, Joseph and Petra. He is also part-time faculty at Redeemer University College where he teaches World Religion.

Responses to Calvin 500 Conference:

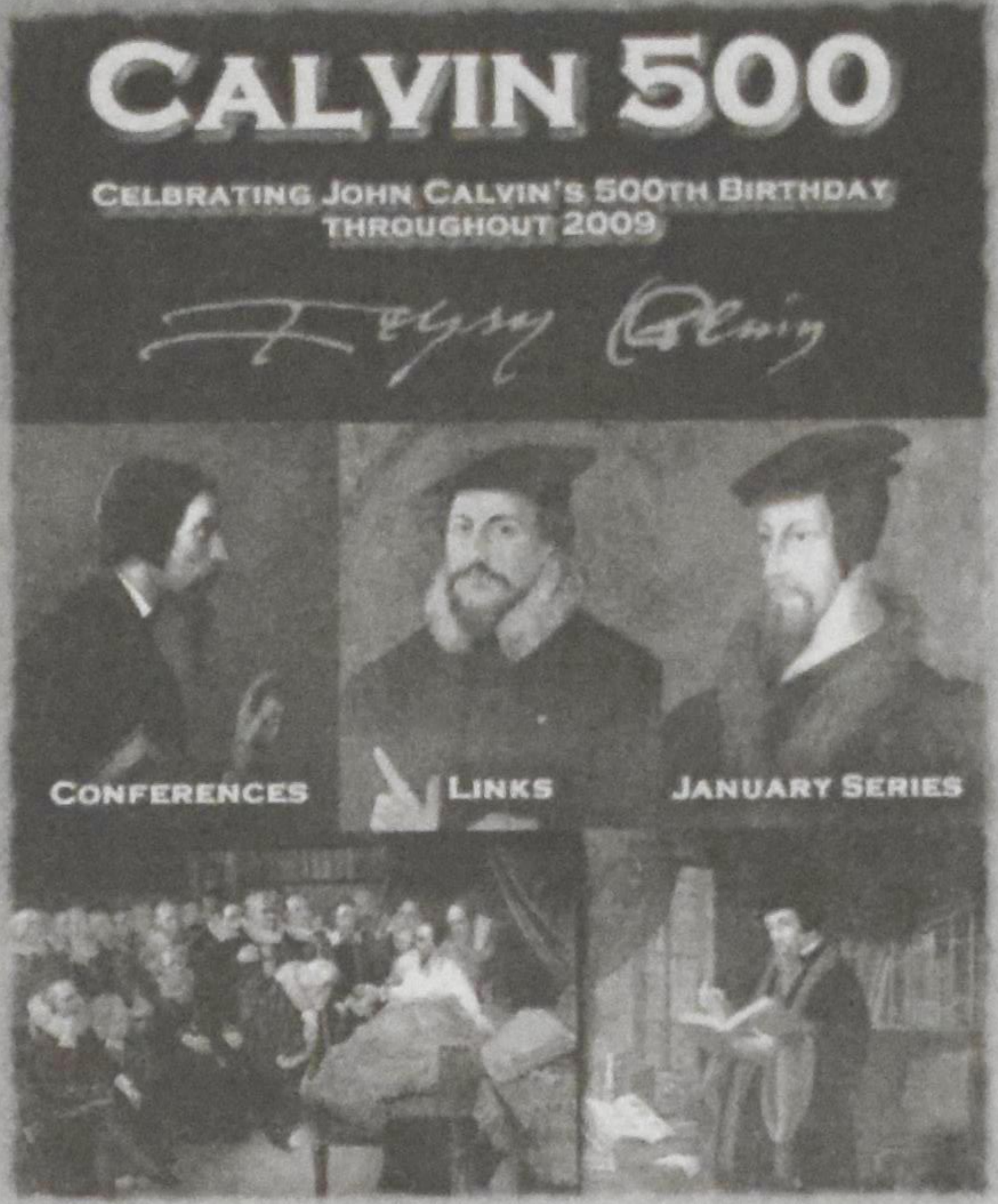
Dr. Calvin Seerveld: "It was very refreshing to hear informed people from many different church backgrounds speak so glowingly about John Calvin's worldview and the Reformed tradition, for two whole days at the University of Toronto."

Rev. Dr. John Suk: "It was lovely to see these diverse scholars all get along and how interesting they are to each other. This conference has been a model for ecumenism."

Jason Postema, Pastor of Youth and Outreach at Aylmer CRC: "The conference was a success. Three of the workshops stand out in my mind: "Sex and Gender in Reformed Churches," because it was interesting to hear that how, as a denomination, the administration of the CRC supports women in all offices of ministry, but, how on a congregational level, this is often an exception to current practice where a graduated mentality still exists in many churches. Conversely, it was interesting to hear about the declining involvement of men in denominations across Canada, due mostly to negative male stereotypes prevalent in our culture that contradict the Fruits of the Spirit and an apparent unwillingness of churches to address the spiritual needs of men.

The second workshop was John Suk's workshop on "Preaching to Postmoderns". Dr. Suk cogently explained the evolution from pre-literate, to literate, to post-literate society and how this impacts the preparation and preaching of the Word. Because current preaching practices are often out of step with cultural realities, the expository sermon is becoming increasingly irrelevant in a post-literate society. Dr. Suk described fresh ways of preaching to captivate the postmodern imagination.

The third workshop of note was Mark VanderVennen's "Biblical Faith and Walking Down Paths of Peace." VanderVennen outlined a third way beyond the current "Just War/Pacifist" polarization that exists in most Christian discourse concerning war and peace, discussing the Biblical understanding of idolatry, peace, and the conquest of Canaan.



Christians across the world are celebrating the Quincentennial of Calvin's birth throughout 2009. On August 27-29, the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary is holding a conference at Calvin College called "Calvin for the 21st Century."

Also at Calvin College, from September 3-5, the Protestant Reformed Churches in America are hosting discussions on "After 500 years: John Calvin for the Reformed Churches today."

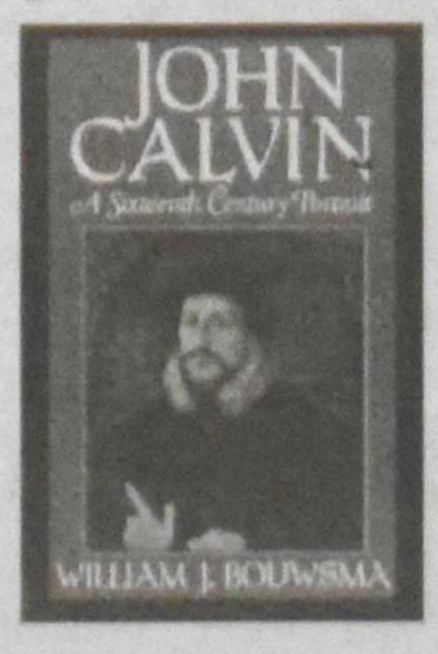
For information on these and other events, check out calvin.edu/meeter/events/calvin2009

Resources on John Calvin

One reason secular academics have ignored Calvin studies may be just the sheer volume of it. There are at least 3,500 books on Calvin plus some 13,000 articles. Below is just a teaser of what may lie within that vast scholarly ocean.

"Calvin, Theologian of Sweetness" (Calvin Theological Journal 37 (2002): 318-332) by I. John Hesselink brings a refreshing angle to the character and theological vision of Calvin. His thesis is this: "Calvin's fondness for and frequent use of the noun *sweetness* and its cognates reveal not only something about Calvin's style and personality, but it also has its theological ramifications." Hesselink concludes that "Calvin appeals to his readers by the sweetness of the God who in Jesus Christ is 'utterly kind, sweet, generous, and merciful'" because he is "a theologian who speaks from the heart to the heart, one who tastes and feels the goodness and grace of God."

"Hero or Villain? Interpretations of John Calvin and his Legacy" (*Calvin Theological Journal*, 41 (2006):222-237 by Calvin College Meeter Center director Karin Y. Maag excavates much of the fact and fiction surrounding Calvin. Her purpose: "to engage in a reflection regarding the nature of historical reputation and the significance of the battles that have raged over Calvin's impact to try to see how Calvin's contemporaries and later generations have dealt with his legacy." She suggests reasons for why Luther has three major motion pictures to his credit and Calvin has none. She also critiques the shoddy scholarship that has, for example, falsely suggested Calvin had his step-son and daughter-in-law executed when they were found in bed with their lovers. Maag also offer important details regarding the Servetus trial, ending with the warning: "If we try to raise [our heroes of the faith] up above other people, we risk distorting their impact and trying to hide or deny aspects of their actions that are troubling." Calvin was human, and good scholarship illuminates both glory and shame.



John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait (Oxford, 1988) by William Bouwsma is an interesting psychological portrait that describes the tensions and anxieties that struggled within the heart of Calvin, a man he calls "a French intellectual, an evangelical humanist, and therefore a rhetorican, and an exile." Bouwsma uncovers the metaphors of "abyss" and "labyrinth" that pepper the writings of Calvin and demonstrates how they represent the opposing impulses of his day – the break-away anabaptist groups and the trappings of the Catholic church respectively. He says, quite wisely, "The Calvin with whom most of us are acquainted is chiefly an artifact of later Calvinism. He demonstrates our very human tendency to invent the fathers we need, even if it means making sure that they cannot rise up to contradict us."

Church

CRC Synod decisions 2009

Marian Van Til
with files from Synod News Office

PALOS HEIGHTS, Ill. – The annual general synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America met for just under a week in mid-June in the Ozinga Chapel on the campus of Trinity Christian College, southwest of Chicago. Due to the economic downturn, the synod did not meet at the King's University College in Edmonton as originally planned. Its usual meeting place is Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Virus lays delegates low

Though this was not a news-heavy synod, 63 delegates, support staff and college workers became the subject of area newscasts when they contracted an unknown, flu-like virus which confined many of them to their beds. The Cook County Health Department sent two investigators to the campus on Tuesday, June 16, because of the large number of people who became ill almost simultaneously. Health officials needed to determine the source and nature of the virus, and to rule out food poisoning – which they did. The college passed the food inspection with an almost perfect score. Stool samples were then collected from some delegates who fell ill to try to determine another common cause for the illness.

It was eventually determined that the cause was a norovirus, one of a family of viruses that causes gastroenteritis or stomach flu. The virus is spread through hand contact with others, and by touching items (doorknobs, telephones) that infected people have touched. Bottles of hand sanitizer were distributed around the campus and delegates and all others on campus were told to be careful and to thoroughly wash their hands with soap whenever they could.

The Third Wave report, the Belhar Confession *and all matters synod scrutinized can be read online at <http://www.crcna.org/site_uploads/uploads/resources/2009_agenda.pdf>*

Ozinga Chapel interior

'Third Wave' report approved

The phrase "Third Wave" was coined by C. Peter Wagner to describe three periods of activity by the Holy Spirit in the 20th century and into the present. Wagner is a former professor of church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission, founder of Global Harvest Ministries and co-founder of the World Prayer Center.

Wagner sees a "first wave" at the beginning of the 20th century with the Azusa Street Revival among black Americans in Los Angeles in 1906; a second wave during the 1960s as the charismatic movement spread throughout some Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church; and a third wave beginning in the mid-1980s with a resurgence of church planting and an emphasis on "signs and wonders." Each of these waves has been based on subtly different theologies of the Holy Spirit.

Many Christians, including numerous conservative Pentecostals, have rejected the Third Wave as being unbiblical because, e.g., unlike Pentecostals who traditionally held that the baptism of the Holy Spirit comes after prolonged "tarrying" for the Spirit, the Latter Rain movement (part of the Third Wave) has taught that the baptism of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit can be imparted on one believer by another through the laying on of hands.

Widespread appeal

Third Wave teachings about the Holy Spirit and how God works in the world today have heavy influence on and widespread appeal for non-Pentecostal Christians, including many in evangelical and Reformed churches. An earlier study committee brought a report to Synod 2007, but that synod withheld action and suggested further study, providing a more comprehensive and up-to-date biblical response to current Third Wave Pentecostalism. The conclusions of that further study are what Synod 2009 approved.

Study committee reporter Rev. Leonard Riemersma told delegates, "We had intense discussions on every sentence before you. We came to unanimous support of all that is here." Overall, there is much good in Third Wave Pentecostalism, the majority report concluded, and synod agreed. "One issue – whether there is real prophesy from God today – caused some dissent," reported the Synod News Office. "Some people argued that prophesy is limited to prophets in the Bible. Others said they believe that some form of prophesy is alive today." There was also disagreement over whether speaking in tongues (a major charismatic characteristic) is legitimate if no one is able to interpret what is said, as St. Paul requires.

A "minority report" authored by a minority of the study committee members concluded that "questionable beliefs" in the Third Wave were not adequately addressed by the majority report. One such belief, said the minority, is that "it is possible for Christians to have the Spirit within them for sanctification, but not upon them for empowerment…. This divides believers into two groups, those empowered by the Holy Spirit and those unempowered. Such a division carries with it the potential for spiritual elitism on the part of those who supposedly are empowered, and feelings of spiritual inferiority on the part of those who supposedly are unempowered."

The majority report does call attention to some serious problems with Third Wave Pentecostalism, but not as rigorously as the minority thought necessary. One of those is misuse of spiritual gifts and healing ministries. "Charismatic ministries sometimes cause pain and therefore we greatly appreciate the pastoral wisdom of these reports," Riemersma said. The report recommends that people take the movement seriously but beware of such misuses, and of exaggerations or misinterpretations of biblical principles.

Hindi ministry in India approved

Synod approved Back to God Ministries International's request to expand its media ministry into the Hindi language in India. This work will be done in partnership with other Christian ministries. "Even in today's economy, a modest investment of money can move forward a powerful ministry in Hindi. And although we will be reaching out to millions, we will connect with one person at a time," said BGMI's director Rev. Bob Heerspink.

Currently BGMI's ministries reach people in nine languages in 201 countries via TV, radio, video, print, websites and cell phone technologies.

Belhar Confession sent to congregations for comment

After a three-hour debate, synod voted 127-40 to propose the adoption of the Belhar Confession to Synod 2012 as a fourth confession of the church, along with the *Heidelberg Catechism*, the *Belgic Confession* and the *Canons of Dort*. The *Contemporary Testimony* has never been given the status of a "confession." CRC church councils and their congregation members will now have three years to study the *Belhar Confession*, which was originally written as a reaction to church- and state-sanctioned apartheid in South Africa. It focuses on unity, reconciliation and justice and was adopted by the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa in 1986. All CRC congregations have now been encouraged by Synod 2009 to study and review the confession before it is (potentially) accepted as one of the standards of unity of the Christian Reformed Church by Synod 2012. Some delegates assumed that because it is being proposed as a confession – on a par with the Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons – it will have a high profile, which may encourage wider discussion. The committee that placed the proposal before Synod 2009 asserted that adopting the Belhar would be "an important testimony to the membership of the CRC that together we stand firm on matters that are rooted in scriptural teaching and flow from the heart of God."

During the debate, many delegates questioned content or expressed discomfort with the *Belhar Confession*. Some expressed doubt about it being truly biblical, asserting that it does not state unambiguously that the *only* salvation of the world comes through Jesus Christ. "The Belhar has done a good job of making us aware of the problem with apartheid. But it does not formally affirm salvation in Jesus as do our other confessions," said Jose Rayas, an elder from Classis Arizona. "I do not believe that it is best to raise the *Belhar Confession* to the same standard of our other confessions." Some delegates felt that, in effect, it espouses a form of liberation theology. Liberation theology emphasizes the Christian mission to bring justice to the poor and oppressed, but primarily through political activism, not the preaching of the biblical gospel. Its theologians consider sin the root of poverty, but especially "exploitative capitalism" and class war by the rich against the poor, and white against black.

Rev. John Bolt, professor of systematic theology at Calvin Seminary, also said he has concerns about the *Belhar Confession*. "There is so much in it that it is hard for people not to passionately agree with. But certain statements could create disunity." Rev. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., president of Calvin Theological Seminary, admitted there are varying views on the Belhar among seminary faculty. But for the most part, he said, the faculty "is very hospitable to the Belhar Confession and some of us are very enthusiastic." The Reformed Church in America's synod recently approved it by a vote of 166-65. But it still must be voted on by all of the classes in that church and approved by two-thirds of them. The CRC was asked several years ago in a letter sent by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church to examine the Belhar and to adopt it as a formal confession. Among other things, the Belhar states: "We reject any ideology which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel…. We believe that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only head, the church is called to confess and to do all these things, even though the authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence."

(*See related article on p.6*)

Food

Grappling with food: A gourmand's struggle with a bad gut

Marian Van Til

I *love* food! I'm a gourmand, or, in pop-culture slang, a "foodie." I relish meal times: at home, with friends, in restaurants. I take great pleasure in coffee breaks, delighting in the coffee itself (if it's *good*).

Excepting raw meat or fish, bird's nest soup and a few other "delicacies," I'll try almost any food that I know is well-prepared. That's the key: well-prepared. I used to hate brussel sprouts. And spinach, peas, turnips, shrimp and lamb.

Children don't have adventurous palettes. No matter how much their mothers or fathers insist, if the kid doesn't like peas (too mealy) she is bound to be sitting alone at the table for a long time unless her parents finally relent, because it's not likely the child will. I know!

Revelatory brussel sprouts

Part of my hating certain foods began early and remained through adulthood until – until! – I began to discover the simple truth that the key to making "bad foods" taste good was in how they are seasoned and prepared. After I had moved to St. Catharines to teach, a couple of friends and I decided to splurge and visit the Prince of Wales restaurant in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It's an expensive place with well-set, white-linen tables, attentive waiters and very fine food. Brussel sprouts were served, and they were a revelation to me.

I had tried that hitherto nasty vegetable a couple of times and found it bitter, soggy and generally awful, the kind of thing a kid simply spits out. But the Prince of Wales chef prepared it differently – quite fresh, for one thing. Sprouts, like cabbage, spinach and some root vegetables, start to become bitter once picked. It has something to do with the sugars turning to starch, I believe. These sprouts were both sweet and savory, cooked to perfection, ever so slightly crunchy but not underdone, seasoned perfectly.

'Big deal' discovered

I had another food revelation within a year or so of that one. Growing up, my family ate no seafood as such. Fish sticks were as exotic as things got in that department. A housemate of mine in St. Catharines had a boyfriend who cooked. He came to visit and prepared a meal for her where the main protein was shrimp. Friend's Boyfriend prepared shrimp scampi: raw, peeled shrimp thrown into a saute´ pan with melted butter, white wine and fresh, chopped garlic. When Friend's Boyfriend gave me a taste of the shrimp, I was shocked. I loved it!

Those two experiences reinforced that my previous culinary world had been confined. I don't blame my mother. She had learned to cook from her German mother, who had married a Dutchman. Said German mother, my grandmother, apparently was afraid that whatever she threw into a pot might jump out again, so she cooked roasts into a brown-crusted clump, green beans into mush, and potatoes into mealy blobs. I don't think a raw carrot ever crossed her lips. Even when she baked, she tended to get breads *brown,* and did the same for olie bollen. Fortunately for us, my mother had modified her mother's technique somewhat, but the tradition my mom continued was serving food mostly unseasoned (read: bland).

Prince of Wales Hotel, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Food fixations

Despite my culinarily impoverished youth, I loved food. But I was picky. I *loved* only a limited number of

foods, mostly breads. Like my Aunt Helen's homemade bread, which I'm pretty sure I could have polished off by the whole loaf had I been allowed to (with butter and my mom's strawberry jam). I also salivated over my mom's almond ring pastry, a yeast-raised, almond-cinnamon coffee cake (nothing like the Dutch almond rings that appear at Christmas time).

I grew up near Chicago, so deep-dish sausage pizza was high on my list of bliss-inducing foods. As was the Chicago-style hot dog one could get at the major league ball parks and various dives and road-side stands. Ethnic foods, Mexican and Greek among them, I also encountered fairly early, though not at home, as you can imagine.

I didn't regularly experience culinary bliss until Ed and I lived in Lewiston and had neighbors, a young couple, of Italian extraction. They often invited us to join their family feasts. Feasts is not too strong a word. If you went there at, say, 4:00, you were there – eating and eating and drinking dry red wine – for at least the next six hours. They knew the meaning of multi-course meals.

God-implanted irony

But. There's an important "but" here. There's a great irony in my unwavering love of good food: I have an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), Crohn's, diagnosed 30-odd years ago. But my digestive system disorders go back to adolescence. It's a genetic weakness.

Crohn's is no laughing matter, but at this point I can laugh at the irony of God sending such an ailment to someone so … I almost want to say. . . *addicted* to good food. I say God sent it; I didn't bring it on myself (knowingly) and it didn't just happen (nothing "just happens"). During most of those years I had a love-hate relationship with nearly everything I tried to eat. As I could eat less and less and became sicker and sicker, that didn't curb my love of food. Often I just ate what I loved and paid the price.

I now realize that had God not afflicted me with such a disease, I would have become insufferable, not to mention lacking in self-control. God pruned me where I needed pruning, taught me what I needed to learn – also about how to *properly* enjoy the countless exquisite foods and food sources he placed in creation.

For the last five months I've been on a fairly fast track to recovery at last. My diet is healthy. Daily I eat meat, fruit, vegetables. And long-fermented, no-lactose homemade yogurt with almost every meal, for its "good bacteria."

Here's the part that once would have felt like a real burden: I can eat no bread (no grains at all). And no rice, potatoes or sweet potatoes; no white sugar, brown sugar, molasses or maple syrup. The only sugars I eat are in fruit and small amounts of honey. The delicacy I still miss is dark chocolate. But I may be able to go back to it some day. What I eat is fresh or made from fresh ingredients, and nothing contains additives, preservatives, sugar or corn syrup. There's a name for my diet – the Specific Carbohydrate Diet (see <www.ReformedRevelry.wordpress.com>). It was devised to treat IBDs but it's good for everyone. Ed, eating this way with me, has lost 40 pounds.

"What a drag," some might say. No, not really. With no effort at all I've lost 35 pounds and have leveled off at an optimum weight. I enjoy increasingly good health. And the food I eat is just *really, really good stuff*. It's not "diet food," just a way of eating. I have two cookbooks based on this diet and every recipe I've tried is a keeper.

So here's my challenge: try the recipes I've included and see what you think. They contain no sugar, no wheat, no milk. And don't feel sorry for *me*. I'm no longer suffering!

Valencia Orange Cake

2 oranges (Valencia, if possible)
4 eggs
1/4 – 1/2 cup honey, to taste
2 cups blanched almond flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking soda

Wash the oranges then boil them whole (with peels) in a covered saucepan with a small amount of water until soft, 20-30 minutes. Process oranges in food processor until thoroughly mushed. Add all other ingredients, process again until batter is mixed. Pour into 9" round cake pan. Bake at 375 F (190 C) for 45-50 min. Glaze: Reduce 1 cup of unsweetened orange juice by simmering in a saucepan until as thick as you'd like. Spoon over individual pieces of cake.

Apple Muffins

2 cups (500 mL) almond flour
1/4 tsp (1 mL) salt
1/2 tsp (2 mL) baking soda
1-2 tsp (5-10 mL) cinnamon, as desired
2 tart apples, peeled, chopped
3 eggs
1/2 cup plain yogurt (or unsweetened applesauce)
1/4 - 1/3 cup honey
Add chopped walnuts if desired

Heat oven to 325 F (160 C). Line a muffin tin with baking cups. Combine dry ingredients. Add wet ingredients. Mix well. Fill baking cups. Bake for 20-25 minutes.

Food

Bieneke' story (2) – Childhood memories

This is the second part (part 1 in June 22 issue) of the life of Jacobina Wilhelmina Radsma, née Vlaar, as told to her daughter Marion. The series will continue in following issues.

It's probably a good thing that my sister was there to protect me from the water. When I was just a little older, maybe about seven years, I always seemed to be falling into the slooten or canals surrounding our place. In those days, canals and other, smaller water channels wove through and around our village. Many of them are now filled in, replaced by modern roads. When I was a girl, though, we had to travel by water to reach our fields. We used a *schuit,* a kind of small barge powered by either a small engine or a person with a long wooden pole.

Times were much different then. We had to walk two miles (one way!) to get to school – with a daily trip back home at noon to have lunch. As kids we did a lot of walking. Three quarters of it was along the roadway that flanked the *sloot.* We walked between the houses on one side and a double row of trees that lined the canal bank. Young and reckless, we often walked between the trees and the water – so often, in fact, that we wore a path there. One careless afternoon after school, my friend and I noticed a number of workers deadheading the field of tulips across the water from us. We ducked behind the trees to the creek side and called out to them to ask for a few. "Yeah, sure," they yelled back, "why not?" since they were getting rid of the flowers anyway. They tossed an armload over the water to us but unfortunately their throws were not quite strong enough and most of the tulips fell into the *sloot.* Pietje, my girlfriend, told me she'd hold tight to me if I wanted to stretch out and reach for them. We picked our way lower and lower down the embankment. I reached out and nearly had one... oh, no! Pietje's foot slipped, she let go of my hand – and over I plunged, head first into the water. Pietje's feet slipped along with mine; she dropped in right on top of me. A couple of the field workers dashed gallantly over to rescue us, but we were already climbing – no flowers, of course – up the embankment, dripping canal water and shrieking with laughter. Why we wanted those flowers is still a puzzle to me; we had them in the house, in the gardens, in the fields as far as you could see – fields and fields of them and in multitudes of colours.

Another moment of my waterlogged seventh year is lit by my memory.... It was a warm and gentle Wednesday afternoon in the summer. My older (by three years) sister Brechtje and her friend were playing house with my friend – coincidentally Brechie's friend's sister – and me in their back yard. As part of the fun, we were drinking tea in a most ladylike way with a small tea set they had. It was just my luck that I dropped one of the cups and it broke. It was an accident! But they were angry anyhow so I ran away. All three of them chased after me, even Brechie. We ran round and round on the path over the property. Hah! They couldn't get me. On the corner of the path stood a small toolshed; we ran around this shed, back over the lawn, onto the path again, over and over – and they were still after me. All of a sudden I got tired and fed up with it all and jumped straight into the water.

There I stood, panting, in the water. Nobody had followed me in; they all stopped stock still and gazed at me stunned. Early this fall I called Brechie in Holland and we talked for a while about the early days of our childhood – we also talked about this episode. And she said, "To this day I don't understand why you walked straight into the water like that." And believe it or not, neither do I. She is now 78 years old and still remembers that moment of shocked disbelief. Some things you never forget! Oddly enough though, despite these early adventures and my apparent attraction to water, I did not learn to swim until I was married and had two young children of my own.

Here is a recipe reminiscent of childhood days in Holland.

Hutspot met klapstuk

- 750 grams carrots
- 500 grams parsnips
- 250 grams white beans
- 250 grams onions
- salt & pepper
- 500 grams brisket or stew meat
- peppercorns
- bay leaf

Wash the beans and let them soak overnight in plenty of water. Boil 2 litres of water, add salt and pepper, the meat, peppercorns and bay leaf and bring to a boil again. Turn down the heat and let simmer for 2.5 hours. Take the meat from the stock and cut into smaller pieces.

Slowly cook the beans, using the water in which they have soaked, for twenty minutes. In the meantime, clean and scrub the carrots, parsnips and onions and cut them in chunks.

Add the stock and vegetables to the simmering beans and slowly cook for another 45 minutes. Drain the mix, add the meat cubes and season to taste. Mix well and serve.

What's for supper?

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

I can't count the number of times my kids have walked into the kitchen and asked, "What's for supper, Mom?" After cooking and serving thousands of meals, I finally realize that my answer should include more than just the menu. The next time they ask, I'll answer, "We're having spaghetti, fellowship, celebration, corn, laughter, applesauce, devotions, and carrot sticks."

Suppertime means more than eating a meal and nurturing our bodies. It also sustains our communal and spiritual lives if carried out in the spirit of Proverbs 15:17: "Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred." A loving mealtime atmosphere allows families to celebrate, reminisce, grow in faith, build bonds, and have fun.

Celebrate!

Nearly every family observes Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and birthdays with special meals. But you don't need an official holiday in order to celebrate. Everyday events and routine milestones can also be marked with festivities big or small. For example, when my daughter Davita started school, she asked excitedly, "May we have candles at suppertime to celebrate that I'm going to kindergarten tomorrow?" That night our table glowed with candlelight to mark a new stage in Davita's life.

What other events can you celebrate? How about when your child's first tooth falls out, when your kids bring home good report cards, when your dog gives birth to puppies, when a winter storm causes school to close, or when your daughter's basketball team wins the city championship? Celebrate by attaching balloons to each family member's chair, using your best china, filling goblets with juice for your kids, or cooking a favourite meal. Besides food and props, celebrate with words. Write a meaningful poem, and read it aloud. Praise your child for victories achieved. Encourage your child with hope as he or she faces new endeavours. Express joy when your son or daughter comes home from college.

Suppertime can be an occasion for laughter – a powerful antidote to cynicism, pessimism, unbelief, and distrust. Once sixteen-year-old Tamara said to fourteen-year-old Benjamin, "Remember the time in first grade that you didn't wear socks in your rubber boots when you went to school?" Benjamin instantly recalled his plight that day, and we all laughed at this snapshot of his life.

At the end of another meal 4-year-old Davita couldn't finish her bagel and cheese. Appealing to my sense of caring, she said seriously, "The bagel and cheese were lonely, Mom, so I put them in the compost bucket for company." Nurture laughter by recalling humorous events from your child's past, by telling a joke, or by reminiscing about an amusing event in your life.

Spiritual nourishment

Mealtimes provide spiritual nourishment when families have devotions. Reading the Bible reminds us that God is the source of everything in our lives, including food. Therefore, we value our food and honour God. In prayer we remember the world's poor and hungry people, and we ask that we can become more Christlike by sharing our wealth. Our hearts overflow with thanksgiving for what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. We lay our needs before the Lord, and thank him for what our family members mean to us. Through singing we praise God, exalting him for his mighty deeds. Bible reading, prayer, and singing feed our families' spiritual lives.

When we celebrate, laugh, reminisce, and remember God, our fellowship grows. In *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning of Table Manners*, Margaret Visser says, "We use eating as a medium for social relationships: satisfaction of the most individual of needs becomes a means of creating community" (HarperCollins Publishers, Ltd., 1991, pp. IX).

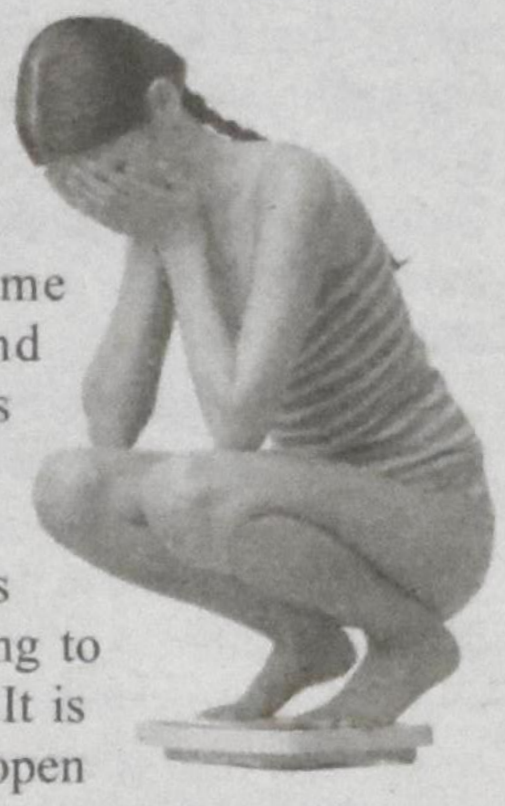
No calories in Eden

Meredith K.C. Gipson Hoogendam

I spent most of my grade ten year eating nothing but dry blueberry bagels. The year before, I subsisted solely on bran flakes with skim milk and Empire apples. The empty chair at the dinner table was not a seat for Elijah – although my family would have likely been relieved had he suddenly manifested himself – rather, it was for me, whose fear of food and need for control made it necessary to extricate myself from the family meal. A scenario all too common today for adolescents (most often, but not always, female), I battled with anorexia, struggling for a good year and a half before I was ready to seek healing and treatment.

Like many self-destructive behaviors, disordered eating is not the actual problem; rather, it is a symptom of more complex psychological issues. Unfortunate is the rise we have seen in disordered eating over the past fifteen or so years, but perhaps even more unfortunate is the knee-jerk response that we as a culture have developed as a defense against the over-saturation of this issue in the media. While I remained somewhat of an anomaly among my peer group at the time (this was the early 1990s), the "rarity" of my situation allowed for a relatively quick response from teachers and guidance counselors, an unlikely scenario for many disordered eaters today, who are sadly often one of multiple "wounded sheep" among the academic, congregational or familial flock.

As a Christian who believes desperately that it is our vocation to be good stewards of the earth and equally good caretakers of human community, I am heartened by the recent "back to the earth" movement taken up by folks across the world, specifically the individuals and groups of Christians who act on the belief that eating well is, literally, a matter of biblical proportions. As we cram our crispers with organic vegetables and fill our gullets with local honey and stone-ground grains, I believe we are acting in accordance with God's vision for his creation, taking care of that which we have been given and multiplying it to feed our families, friends, strangers, and extended communities. Some of us have even given ourselves to what has been dubbed "radical hospitality," opening our cupboards and tables to anyone in need at any time of any day. These actions are righteous, commendable, and soul-feeding. The desire to fill and feed others with healthy food that has been grown by hand or acquired by humane needs is, I believe, a fulfillment of Christ's command to love others. The germ of such actions – radical hospitality, an open table, and dirty fingers from growing food that will be used to feed others – can be understood as that particular brand of love that is concerned with nourishment. To nourish is not simply to feed the stomach, but to feed the heart and soul as well. When we nourish, we are conduits of God's love at its most elemental, as the other receives Christ's love in metabolic form, food and energy and love coming together in the inner sanctum of the human body.



What, then, does this nourishment mean in terms of our disordered eaters? While prime time television and numerous websites have made a fetish out of such illness, what have we as Christians been doing to heal these wounds? It is easy to nourish the open mouth of a hungry stranger, but what about the closed mouth of a starving teenaged girl? Who is God to that girl, if her peers, pastor, and family distance themselves from her, paralyzed by lack of knowledge and fear of her disease? We often feel more equipped to send money and even human support to the starving on other continents, but stop ourselves from comforting the anorexic or bulimic among us.

We know that the issue is not food, but nourishment, and while not all of us are blessed with a green thumb or a golden spatula, we nevertheless have the capacity to care for the distraught, the disturbed, the lonely and the fearful, even if it simply means praying for that person, taking her (or him) out for a movie, or perhaps even simply giving the gift of your warm, well-fed body through a hug or a handshake. While it is not appropriate to attempt to "fix" the problem by forcing that person to eat (obviously this issue becomes more complex when hospitalization is necessary), nourishment does not have to involve feeding that person with literal food. The tenuous membrane of self-defense created by disordered eaters is easily disrupted by the nourishing, nonsexual touch of another human being.

Resources

There are many fine resources out there on disordered eating, but some books and websites are better then others. Rather than include a potentially never-ending chronicle of sites and texts, my recommendations for a good place to start – one book and one website – are as follows:

Book: *The Secret Language of Eating Disorders: How You Can Understand and Work to Cure Anorexia and Bulimia* by Peggy Claude-Pierre

On the Web: "ED [Eating Disorder] Bites": A website created and maintained by my whip-smart Hope College dorm-mate, Carrie Arnold: http://ed-bites.blogspot.com

As with any form of prejudice or phobia, the antidote for fear and paralysis is knowledge and communication. Regardless of whether or not you, your family, or your church congregation comes into contact with a disordered eater, because we are part of a human family it is the responsibility of Christ's followers to open our hearts to this issue and these people. Unfortunately, especially in terms of the youth in our lives, it is far too easy to pass off anorexia and bulimia as part and parcel with teenaged angst. It is not. Eden was not equipped with charts listing the caloric and fat values of the ripe heavy fruit or lush vegetables growing in its bounds. Food was meant to be good, healing, and whole – a manifestation of God's desire to fill our every need. We must remember these truths when we encounter disordered eating, and ask God for the wisdom to nourish the person who struggles.

Known simply as "Katie" to family and friends, Meredith is a native Michigander who has come to live in and love Canada. Freelance writer, feverish creative and sometime high school teacher, graduate student and amateur poet, Katie has recently finished her MA in English. Currently, she spends her time teetering on the edge of the future.

What's for supper? *...continusd from p 12*

Christian parents know that the community created around their table is not restricted to family members. It includes another guest, the Lord himself through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus ate and drank with sinners, and he still does today. In the *More-With-Less Cookbook*, Doris Janzen Longacre says, "Jesus hallowed the common meal when he broke bread, shared wine, and said, 'This do in remembrance of me.' It was at mealtime that he revealed himself as risen Lord to the two from Emmaus. He invites us to join the consummation feast, the marriage supper of the Lamb. Let us eat together in his name" (Herald Press, 1976, pp. 49).

Dinner tips

But let's not kid ourselves. Just because we eat together in Jesus' name doesn't mean that all our mealtimes are perfect. In fact, suppertime can be chaotic and stressful. How can you make it less so?

Make sure you and your kids aren't ravenous by suppertime. Children (and parents) become cranky when they're very hungry. An hour or so before supper, combat fatigue and hunger pangs with raw vegetables, fruit, or other nutritious snacks that won't rob your kids of their appetite. As a result everyone will be happier when sitting down to supper.

Keep supper simple and manageable. Nutritious meals don't need to consist of four courses of exotic, hard-to-make dishes. Simplicity reduces stress beforehand and cleanup afterward. Also, remind your children that your kitchen isn't a restaurant. Expect everyone to eat what you have prepared instead of demanding made-to-order menus.

Don't allow the telephone to tyrannize your meal. Take charge by using your answering machine, taking your phone off the hook, or telling people that you'll call back later.

Reduce sibling conflicts by dividing and conquering. Place antagonistic siblings out of reach of each other's jutting elbows and poking hands. If the table is too small, add an extra leaf.

Finally, reduce conflicts about suppertime chores by posting a list on the fridge defining each child's task. Include all your children, giving each an age-appropriate job.

Sometimes when my family sits down to eat and we hold hands to form a circle for prayer, I glance at my family's faces. I am so thankful then for each special person seated there and for the ritual of mealtime, which nurtures both our body and our spirit.

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema (sonyavf55 @hotmail.com.) is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, ON.

Summer pesto pizza (August)

1 heaping Tbsp active dry yeast
1 ¼ cups warm water

Stir together in a large bowl until yeast is dissolved.

2 cups flour
1 cup whole wheat flour
1 tsp salt

Add enough flour to make a soft dough. Knead 8-10 minutes until smooth and elastic. Place in greased bowl; turn to grease both sides. Cover with a damp cloth and let rise until doubled (about 45 minutes). Generously grease pizza stone or baking sheet with olive oil. Roll or press dough into pan. Bake in preheated oven at 450F for 5-8 minutes.

½ cup pesto (see below)
3 medium tomatoes, sliced
2 cups cheese, shredded

Spread pesto on crust. Top with tomatoes and cheese. Bake for another 5-8 minutes, until cheese is melted.

Pesto from scratch

Finely chop the following ingredients together in food processor:

1 cup fresh basil leaves
1-3 cloves garlic
1/3 cup pinenuts or walnuts
½ tsp salt

Add 1/3-1/2 cup olive oil to make a thick paste. *(Simply in Season)*

Columns

From Toddlers to Teens
by Denise Dykstra

Food is meant for fellowship

When I first heard that the theme of this month's *Christian Courier* was food, I have to admit I groaned a little. The truth is I'm not a big fan of food. Oh, I like to eat it, who doesn't? But I don't enjoy preparing it and I certainly don't like cleaning it up. To me food is a five-minute pleasure accompanied by an hour of harrowing hard work. And more often than not it just doesn't feel like it's worth the hassle.

Obviously my relationship with food is somewhat negative. Others have vastly different types of relationships. Take our family, for instance.

Ray, my husband, feels the exact opposite when it comes to a meal. He relishes the process as well as the outcome. The method of preparation is a thing of beauty to him, as is the finished product. He'll spend six straight hours smoking a pork shoulder on the barbeque, and the look on his face when he takes the first bite leaves no doubt that he believes every minute of the work was justified.

Our son Sean's relationship with food, on the other hand, is characterized by quantity not quality. At 14 years old, Sean can't seem to get enough grub. While the rest of us eat a standard three meals a day, he's up to at least five or six. His growing body doesn't care what sustenance it gets, as long as it gets a lot and gets it now!

Jamie, who's 12, likes to eat as long as the food in front of her is not on her "*do not serve*" *list*. I wouldn't say she's picky; she just has strong likes and dislikes. And these aren't always what you'd expect. What kid isn't fond of pancakes or hamburgers but thoroughly enjoys ham and broccoli with cheese?

Kelly's relationship with food is also sometimes positive and sometimes negative. But Kelly, 10, isn't affected by her taste buds as much as her nose nerves. This daughter of ours is extremely sensitive to smells. One whiff of an onion will send her fleeing to her room. One hint of a fried egg will steer her straight to the neighbour's!

Six-year-old Tia's relationship with food is similar to Sean's: she also can't seem to get enough. But Tia isn't a growing teenage boy – she's a little girl with a tragic past. To her, food is a source of comfort, a way of soothing hurt. To us, it's an indication of how she's feeling, a sign of security or insecurity, depending on how much she's consuming on the day in question.

And then there's Damien, the youngest of our family. Damien doesn't have much interest in food as a source of nutrition but he sure does love the idea of cooking up a toy. Like many three-year-olds, Damien turns his peas into soccer balls, his french-fries into race cars, and his glass of milk into a big beautiful swimming pool that splashes all over the place. He sees this role-playing as positive – we're not always quite so sure.

We all have our own unique relationship with food. And that's okay. Because I believe what's really important is not what we're eating but what we're doing while we're eating it. You see, God gave us food not just to nourish us but as a means of fellowship.

All through the Bible the people of God came together over food. In the Old Testament they observed feasts and shared sacrifices at the temple, and in the New Testament they threw dinner parties and gathered around the table to discuss politics. Today we can continue this tradition by using food as a gathering point for our own families.

Studies show that eating meals together regularly is good for our physical and emotional health. It encourages better nutrition (home-cooked meals are healthier), it's bonding, and it provides opportunities for communication.

In addition, eating meals together gives us an occasion in which to extend hospitality. We had a timely sermon on this in our church recently. Guest pastor Rev. Tom Oosterhuis, a retired campus minister, took the idea of food as fellowship outside of our own inner circle. He preached that eating together can build community within the church, and it can become "a way of serving the needs of our neighbours and bringing to them the presence of God."

Eating together in community is a means of carrying on the fellowship and the discipleship that Jesus initiated. So the next time you anticipate taking a bite of a big juicy steak, think of someone you could be eating it with.

Denise Dykstra eats her meals in Edmonton, Alberta. She attends the West End Christian Reformed Church. She can be contacted at dykstras@telus.net.

Intangible Things
Heidi VanderSlikke

Dusty old farmers (and other myths)

Next time you meander through the grocery store or sit down to a tasty meal, why not take a few minutes to consider where all that good food originated? While much of our food comes from distant countries, family farms across Canada contribute significantly to the economy and supply a wide range of safe, nutritious, domestically grown foods. Although agriculture is critical to the Canadian way of life, until Jack came along I knew very little about farms or farmers.

The night we met, Jack told me he had just bought a farm. He was moving to the country from the city, trading his urban ways for some rural roots. Visions of a huge, century-old farmhouse danced in my head. I pictured a classic hip-roof barn, standing stately against the horizon, a chick-chick here and a pig-pig there, politely contained within a neatly fenced off yard. He quickly assured me it was more along the lines of Green Acres. Although the telephone was in the house and not up a pole, three other parties shared a common line.

I couldn't tell hay from straw or a tractor from a combine. The concept of production quota mystified me. Old MacDonald aside, I learned that modern farming involved major financing and specialized practices. Over the years I've surprised myself with what I know about farming, but more so with the way it's gotten into my blood. These days I can properly identify most types of equipment, explain its purpose and have a good idea of how big a bank loan is needed to buy it. Beyond that, I truly enjoy the sound of a diesel engine and I tend to drive down the road admiring the crops growing in the field.

Myths about farming

Perhaps influenced by Murray Mclaughlin's *Farmer Song*, some folks think farmers work around the clock, barely eking out a living, battling the elements and temperamental equipment. Others are convinced we tend our livestock by remote control, leaving plenty of time to cruise through the fields in air conditioned comfort. Personally, I don't know any farmers who fit into either category.

At certain times of the year farmers put in long hours; other seasons are more relaxed. Machinery does break down and the weather sometimes works against seeding or harvest. While modern technology has eliminated much of the manual labour, some jobs still take brute strength and determination, and would make most city slickers turn up their nose in disgust. Commodity prices have fallen behind input costs and like most sectors of the economy, our profit margins aren't what they used to be. But you can still make a living as a farmer. If it were not so, there would be no farms.

The truth about chicken farmers

One Sunday we visited a church and chatted with an usher. He asked where we came from and what we did. His eyebrows rose at the answer. As he escorted us down the aisle he said, "Chickens, eh? Never eat the stuff myself. It's so full of hormones and chemicals – no wonder people are dying of tumours and heart disease like never before." Then he smiled and bid us a "Blessed Sunday."

For a nickel I would have extended the right hand of fellowship upside his head. But that wouldn't have been very Christian. So allow me to defend chicken farmers here and now.

The Canadian chicken industry outlawed growth hormones and steroids in the early 1960s. As for antibiotics, we need a veterinary prescription and only use them if the flock gets sick. Strict withdrawal periods apply, ensuring no residual medications pass onto the consumer. We raise our birds in large barns, not cages, and they have continuous access to fresh air, clean water and feed containing absolutely no animal byproducts.Chicken is low in fat and cholesterol and contains all of the essential amino acids. In the thirty years we've been farming, per capita consumption has doubled from 16 kilograms per year in 1978 to 32 kilograms in 2008.

I haven't space to explain supply management (production quota) here. But I can tell you that it's one reason why Canadian chicken farms remain financially viable and have never required government subsidies at the expense of tax dollars. Across Canada, 2800 chicken farms pump 9.5 billion dollars into the economy and are responsible for nearly 50,000 spin-off jobs.

So when you drive through the countryside, maybe stuck behind a farmer hauling some monstrous machine down the highway, remember there's more to agriculture than meets the eye. And be thankful that we live in a country where an abundance of fresh, affordable, safe food is so readily available.

. Heidi VanderSlikke (vanderslikke@ everus.ca) lives in Harriston, Ont.

Food sovereignty – a concern for all Canadians

Joan Brady

When people ask me about whom I am, I respond that I am all about food. I eat it, produce it, prepare it, promote it and sell it. Through my involvement in farm organizations and various community groups, I defend the right to its access in sufficient and nutritious quantities for everyone, I educate in its production, handling and nutrition and I challenge the powers that take away my ability to decide what my food system should look like whether it is government or industry.

Two incidents have been instrumental in my journey to know more and have greater influence on the food my family eats and on the farming industry in general. In 1998, during the "Hog Crisis", a time when we received $35 for the animals that cost $135 to produce and we were loosing upwards of $10,000 a month, an announcement on a noon hour news program caught my attention. Hog farmers were invited to the local food bank so that they could feed their families. The incongruity of this picture lives with me today. Farmers that can not feed themselves! There is something wrong with the system. The second incident was more personal. One of my children, after a life threatening incident, was diagnosed with a severe food allergy – suddenly food had the ability to kill and I needed to know what it contained in minute detail, where it came from and it's potential to cause sickness and death.

These incidents have led me to work in the fields of agricultural policy and lobby to ensure farmers receive a just return for their labour and expertise and are recognized for their place as the solid base on which the food industry must be built. As we face the challenges of costly energy, climate change and increased environmental degradation, it has also become apparent to me that many of the food production, processing and distribution methods that have become widely accepted may have to be re- thought and re-developed to adapt our food supply to the new reality. I have deep concerns that many of the decisions that are made today are driven only by financial considerations with very little thought towards long-term sustainability and the large proportion of Canada's and the world's population that go to bed hungry every night .

It is not just a farmer or government challenge – rather it is every citizens' challenge – to understand and decide on the safety and quality and environmental footprint of the food we eat. When we choose to shop locally or eat organically, we support many local famers. When we request local produce, whether it is fresh, frozen or canned, and locally-grown meats in the grocery store we are helping to make sure these farmers have a fair return for their product and that they in turn continue to live, volunteer and contribute to their own rural communities and the country at large. Each of us should give some thought to where our food comes from and what the future will hold. I, myself, am working toward a food sovereign Canada – where the citizens of this country rather than the governments or industry decide what our food system will look like.

The following definition of Food sovereignty has been developed by Via Campesina, an international movement which coordinates peasant organizations of small and middle-scale producers, agricultural workers, rural women, and indigenous communities.

"Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritizes local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations."

Various groups and projects have been developed and continue to develop in response to the concerns of Canada's food sovereignty. One such project, "The People's Food Policy Project: building food sovereignty in Canada from the ground up," builds on the work of the People's Food Commission, which was held between 1977 and 1980 and which summarized hearings in 75 communities across Canada in a final report entitled T*he Land of Milk and Money*. The Commission revealed the structure of the food system in Canada and the plight of small-scale farming and fisheries, along with increasing impoverishment in cities and among Indigenous people. The new PFPP hopes to engage Canadians to develop a new Canadian food policy developed by the grassroots across the country and greatly strengthened community leadership able to engage and influence policy makers at every level in support of this new food policy. For more information, visit http://foodsecurecanada.org/the-peoples-food-policy-project.

Each of us has our own food story determined by our perspective and life experience. Technological developments in the last century have made society less personally involved in the production, preparation and procurement of food. Food is essential to life, but we have become complacent, and the issues surrounding it are often overlooked. Each of us should consider the implications of Canadian food sovereignty and its effects on present and future Canadians.

Joan Brady (jbrady@hay.net) farms with her family in Huron County. She is the Women's Vice President of the National Farmers Union of Canada (www.nfu.ca) and is employed as a Project Coordinator for FoodNet Ontario (www.foodnetontario.ca)

Reputation

Rodney J. Hugen

Luke 7:34 reads, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." '" I have often marveled at the reputation of Jesus among the Pharisees. They saw him as a glutton who ate way too much and way too often and who didn't push away from the table very quickly. They also saw him as a drunk. You don't get that reputation unless people see you around wine and strong drink a lot. Jesus has the reputation of partying with bad people. Our mothers warned us about the kind of people we associate with and apparently Mary fell down on the job because Jesus was breaking bread with the wrong crowd, and it was assumed that he was a party kind of guy.

I worry about my precious reputation. In a North American culture that worships food and even has a cable television channel dedicated to ways to cook it, I wonder what people think of my eating habits. Gourmet magazines and newspaper headlines proclaim that "food is the new sex." We have vegans and fruitarians and raw veganists. We have those who eat a strict Biblical diet and those who are on low carbohydrate diets. We spend billions annually on various diets to try to lose weight. "Some people eat to live," my friend once said, "and some people live to eat." I think he was putting me in the second category and quite proud to find himself in the first. And that is an issue. Pride. However we eat, we enter into lots of judgments about other's eating habits. Our reputations suffer.

I am a bit of a foodie. I love to cook and love to entertain guests, and I love to eat. I have often cooked for the church pastor, and have had people to my home for dinner parties. I do this because so much good comes when we eat together. People relax and get to know each other and share their lives and their beliefs. So much of Jesus' ministry was around food. Parties and banquets and intimate dinners with his followers fill the gospels. He tells parables around food. He gets in trouble for gathering grain on the Sabbath. His first recorded miracle is making wine at a wedding feast. Food is a big deal. No wonder his judges accused him of gluttony. Unlike the foxes that had holes in the ground, Jesus had no place to lay his head. He was constantly dependant on the grace of his Father offered through the hospitality of others. And he seemingly would eat with anyone anywhere.

Irrespective of how, where, and what we eat, one wonders if we are gracious and hospitable. Can a wandering rabbi and his band of disciples eat with us? Do the homeless and the wealthy rub elbows at our tables? Do we only dine with those we enjoy and with whom we have common bonds? It is easier to eat alone or to eat with only intimates then to be hospitable. Sharing meals was a shimmering mark of the early church. I remember Mom assuring guests at our Sunday dinner table, "No problem, please stay. I'll just throw another potato in the soup...." It is probably how the early church and my Mom got their reputations – their reputation of being known for their love.

Rod Hugen is a founding pastor of the Village Church in Tucson, Arizona and the leader of the Tucson Cluster, a church planting initiative in Tucson.

Picking local freshness

My dad ate bananas slowly, savouring every bite. My mom packed them in his clear Tupperware lunch container every day for 35 years when he was teaching, and he never got sick of them. In the last couple of weeks of his life, I remember my mom asking him if he wanted a banana. He arched an eyebrow and replied: "Dear, you don't even need to ask."

His lifelong obsession started during the Second World War. My dad was 14 when the war broke out and 18 when Holland was liberated. One day, he saw a Canadian soldier sitting on a curb, eating a banana. He hadn't seen one in four years. The soldier offered him a share; dad took a bite – and was hooked for life.

Of course, that's unthinkable now. After all, if your fruit salad calls for dragon fruit, you should be able to get it at the local Metro. For the contemporary consumer, there's no such thing as out of stock, out of season or out of country – every food we want is at our fingertips, year round.

Questions arise

That's because we've created an impressive and extensive worldwide delivery system for produce. By rail, sea and air, the produce you want moves its way, unseen, across the continent to your doorstep. You never have to meet the person (or, in many cases, the corporation) who grew the food, you will never know who shipped the food, and you might not even know where the food comes from – but if you want fresh strawberries … on a Saturday afternoon … in January … in Kenora, Ontario … you can get them.

More and more, however, people have a problem with this. And it has created a thriving movement to buy local food. In fact, just Googling "local food Ontario" returns a staggering 194,000,000 results.

So what is happening? Why is the once-endangered farmers' market such a hot place to be these days? Why have big-name grocery stores started labeling locally grown produce? Why is Foodland Ontario logo suddenly cropping up everywhere? And how on earth do you get that "Good things grow-oh-oh" song out of your head, once you've heard it?

Convincing reasons

There are probably several reasons for this shift.

First, the BSE scare a few years ago made some people nervous. For example, my friend, Dave, now buys all his meat from a local butcher, who only sells locally grown meat. Dave figures the next time meat products are called back – for whatever reason – he wants to know what he's been eating, and from where.

Second, many consumers prefer locally grown food for ecological reasons. All the fuel burned when food is shipped cross-country contributes to climate change, and people looking to reduce their ecological footprint find local food an obvious choice.

Third, there's the economic angle. In Ontario, the agri-food industry contributes more than $33 billion to the Ontario economy and employs about 700,000 people. So in tough economic times, it makes a lot more sense to support the farmer up the road – who probably shops in your store, or gets his car fixed in your shop – than it does to support a factory farm somewhere else.

Fourth, the food is fresher. Many people feel that tomatoes that ripen in a nearby field taste a lot better than tomatoes that ripen in a truck. In fact, the "Savour Ontario" program is a government strategy that helps restaurants to serve only Ontario-produced food. It seems to be working. In many high-end Toronto restaurants today, your server will tell you exactly which dairy your cheese came from, where your beets were grown and what the duck's name was.

Feels good, tastes fantastic

Okay, I'm exaggerating. But only a little.

Obviously, there are some things that can't be grown locally. We're not going to see Cayuga coffee or Kapuskasing pineapples anytime soon, for example. But the demand for local food is rising. And, with it, there is a growing appreciation and awareness of our connection to the people who work so hard to grow it for us.

For me, that's the clincher.

I grew up in Dunnville, Ontario. I got to see, up close, how hard farmers work. How much pride they take in a job well done. How stewardly they are with the land. The way I see it, I have an obligation to support the folks sitting in the pew next to me – my friends, my neighbours and my brothers and sisters.

So, I'm happy to buy local.

It leaves a good taste in my mouth.

Lloyd Rang (lloyd.rang@rogers.com) is a member of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville Ontario. His first published piece of writing was a short story in Calvinist Contact *when he was 12 years old.*

Let God do the cooking

Ellen Vanderwerf

I was interested when I read of the upcoming food issue of Christian Courier. I had a number of food-related thoughts, but I had no real idea how to write about those topics.

I wanted to write about food production and distribution on Vancouver Island, or perhaps to explore that new "Vancouver Island Diet" in which one only eats food produced on the island in a noble effort to support fellow islanders and save on ferry and shipping costs of imported food.

I wanted to write about the value of learning how to make your own food from scratch, maybe even grow it ourselves – especially in these uncertain economic times – and then offer up a few simple recipes like bread, fried chicken, hot chocolate, chicken soup.

I wanted to write about that movie, "Fast Food Nation" and how it was not what I expected it to be. I expected it to awaken within me a desire to learn how to produce and prepare my own food instead of paying others to do it for me. Instead it put my daughter off meat and turned her into a vegetarian.

Then I thought I would write about being a vegetarian. How to ensure you are ingesting an optimal amount of important nutrients. I wondered if the kelp that washes up on shore is edible and if so, how does one prepare it for consumption. (Yes it is edible. You soak it in water to remove impurities and then serve it on salads, use it in stir-fry or simmer it in soups. It is rumoured to be helpful in regulating thyroid disorders because of the high iodine content.)

That got me thinking about the quality of the food available to us, and those rumours that there is less nutritional value in the food these days than there used to be. Some people choose to supplement their food with nutrition provided from other sources. I wondered if vitamin supplements can be considered food. (It is generally better to find food that you know has certain vitamins in it and eat that food rather than buy the vitamin supplement.)

What I have decided to write about is a simple and innovative picnic my family enjoyed yesterday afternoon.

Our solar oven

We've intended to visit the southwest shore of Victoria together as a family since we moved to the island last fall. Finally the day had come. We parked our car along the storm wall in direct sunlight.

While four family members started a walk towards an amazing breakwater path, my son Jake and I spread aluminum foil on the dashboard of the car, shiny side up. I laid seven flat soft tortillas on top of the aluminum foil. While I sliced up the mushrooms and pepperoni, Jake squirted tomato sauce on top of each tortilla, then he sprinkled grated cheddar on top. We both sprinkled the meat and mushrooms on top of seven, forgetting to put no meat on one – for the vegetarian.

While we worked we could hear people reacting in various ways upon seeing what we were doing. There was a lot of good-natured

laughter. Jake and I looked at each other and smiled, enjoying our great idea and swallowing the hungry water our mouths were releasing in anticipation of lunch.

As we finished up we could see that the cheddar was already beginning to melt in the hot sun. We put away the cutting board, knife and leftover food, locked up the car and then set out to find the rest of our family.

We walked out into the ocean on top of the breakwater. There was a big sign on a big fence that strongly suggested that we not walk on the breakwater in windy and turbulent weather. It was an interesting walk. The water to the north of the breakwater was a deep calm aquamarine colour, and floating within it was a lot of kelp and some jellyfish. The water to the south of the breakwater was choppy, and we could see the bubbles of two scuba divers who, I had to assume, were exploring the barnacles and wildlife growing on the breakwater.

Once we found the rest of the family, we all turned around and walked back towards the road. Some of us walked carefully along the beach to the stairway. Others of us stayed on top on the concrete pathway, peeking down over the railing and laughing at the ones ten metres below as they balanced precariously on rocks, trying to hop across the tide to the next piece of beach.

Voila!

Soon it was time to eat the food we had prepared. I took a photo of the food right before lunch. In the photo you can see that the tortillas are curling up at the edges and you can see Jake outside the car window taking his own photo of our lunch.

We took turns, two by two, sitting in the front seats, rolling up our personal pizzas and then stepping out of the car to stand out in the cool air to eat. They were hot and yummy, convenient and thrifty. The only one who was not satisfied with the meal was the daughter who won't eat meat. But we had peanut butter for her.

The ingredients for a meal like this are simple. You need a trip in a minivan, a walk on a pier, the sun to shine hotly upon your dashboard, aluminum foil, and a cooler containing unused campfire food.

Sometimes when a family travels, it is tempting to use the drive-through for fast food to feed us, but all it takes is a little bit of ingenuity to create an affordable, appetising and adventurous meal.

Ellen Vanderwerf (wejdes@gmail.com) lives in Duncan on Vancouver Island.

'A Mildred Budge adventure' – Backslid Christian

Daphne Simpkins

Mildred Budge liked to get to the church fellowship hall a good hour before the service so that she could put her famous cherry cobbler in the oven to bake during the evening service. Then, even though it was not her official job, Miss Budge double-checked the table arrangements, smoothed the disposable paper tablecloths, patted with her own hands the stacks of white paper napkins to ensure there were enough and extra for the spills that would occur, added two pitchers of ice water to the coffee pot table for the water drinkers who were often overlooked, and then she imagined the evening.

It would be good. Refreshed from worshiping God the Father, Maker of the Universe, the family of God would stand in the twilight of the Lord's Day and sing the "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning – new every morning. Great is that faithfulness, oh, Lord. Great is thy faithfulness."

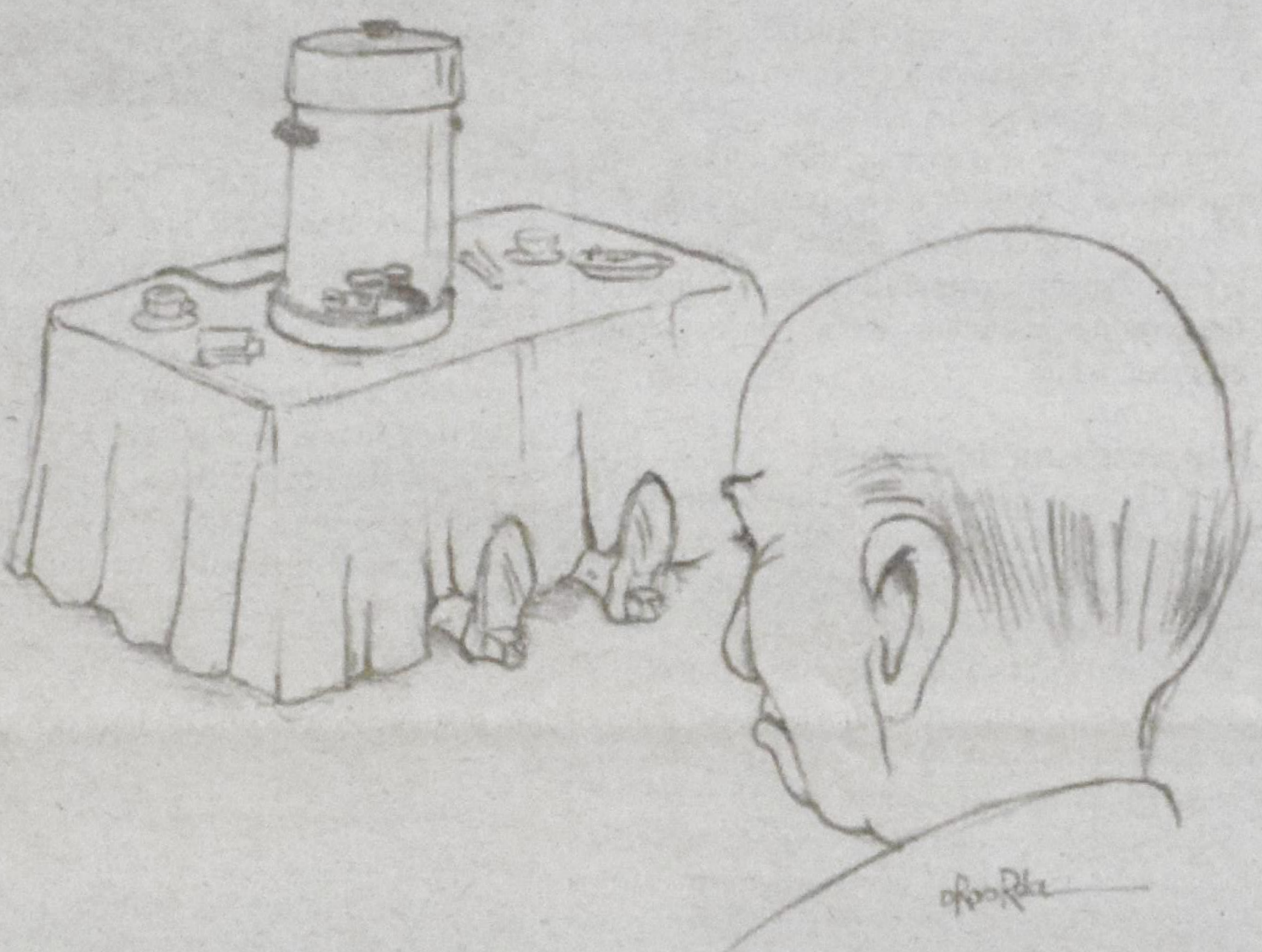
Then, with the sentiments of longing and affection they all held for Jesus and one another fresh on their lips and newly known in their hearts, they would postpone the weekly good-bye for two hours by walking from the sanctuary to the back fellowship hall to share a covered dish supper.

The church lady inhaled of the coming moment, cocking her head as outside cars began to steer into the parking lot. Shortly, other ladies and some men would enter the side door bringing their dishes covered in plastic wrap or foil. These dishes would be placed in the same table spots that had emerged over time as the right places for Elaine's pot roast, Sue's pineapple casserole and Jennie's banana pudding, which had been Thelma's, but Thelma had died of a brain tumor and the recipe was picked up by Jennie and carried forward in time. You didn't eat that pudding without thinking of both women, and Miss Budge smiled with a growing contentment. Her signature dish was the cherry cobbler. She had been making it for years. It had grown in size from a regular Pyrex dish to a doublewide casserole pan, because – and Miss Budge loved this! – people fought over her cobbler, often standing at the end of the table and scraping out the very last spoonful of cherry filling.

Envisioning that moment, Miss Budge thought it a good idea to turn the coffeemaker on so the brew would be ready to drink with her cobbler. She touched the right button, but no red light flickered on. She tapped it again. Nothing. Leaning over, she looked underneath the table and saw the coffeepot's cord hanging loose, unplugged. That wouldn't do.

Dropping to her knees, Miss Budge leaned and bent and reached, but she couldn't grasp the cord that would bring life to the appliance. Unable to crawl underneath the table on her arthritic knees, she simply sat down heavily in her good black slacks on the floor and scooted backwards ducking her head as she went under the beverage table and pushed herself backwards to the outlet. She plugged in the cord just as the side door opened and people entered. Instinctively Miss Budge pulled her legs underneath the table, concluding instantly that rather than emerge in such an undignified posture she would simply wait and come out from under the table after the others had gone.

A steady stream of brothers and sisters



passed through, and Miss Budge felt the fool to be trapped underneath the big beverage table in the fellowship hall. Oddly, the longer she was there the better it felt to simply rest. Someone thought to press the coffeepot button, and the brewing began. The sound of the coffee dripping overhead felt like rain above her and hypnotized her with the rhythm and a message she sometimes forgot: if she hadn't turned on the coffeepot, someone else would have. She didn't have to do it all. She leaned her head back against the cool brick of the wall and vowed to remember that.

The last of the potluckers with dishes to deliver passed through the fellowship hall as the piano in the sanctuary struck the notes of the call to worship, and Miss Budge felt obliged to scramble out, but a strange lethargy came over her and rather than push herself even an inch, she lingered, almost willessly. The unexpected stillness of a voice from deep within her pulsed up from a deep well of her most authentic self and made it to the surface of her consciousness: "Only one thing was ever needed – is still needed. Choose me, and everything else will be added."

Miss Budge inhaled and breathed, "Jesus. Help me to remember."

And she didn't mean that she needed help to remember her cherry cobbler was still in the oven or that one might need to refill those two pitchers of water mid-way through the supper – the water offered in the name of Jesus himself. She asked God to help her remember Jesus instead. Simply Jesus. Her Jesus. His name simmered inside of the veteran church lady, calling her to stillness and more stillness as the recognition of what love and fellowship and worship was and could be.

Fellowship occurred first with him. Then with his.

Miss Budge's cheek found the cool brick of the wall, and she sagged against it, feeling as if she could die there quite happily.

"Miss Budge, are those your feet?" a man's voice asked.

Brother Steve leaned down and pulled back the table cloth.

"Yes," Miss Budge replied weakly. "I was plugging in the coffeepot, and I somehow got sidetracked," she explained.

The piano in the sanctuary played louder – the Call to Worship.

Brother Steve, the preacher, leaned down and offered the church lady his hand.

In charge of the lost and the found, Brother Steve vigorously tugged on Miss Budge until her head was free from the confinement of the refreshment table.

As Miss Budge stood, sand and bits of previous fellowship suppers fell from the back of her second-best black slacks.

"Miss Budge, you appear to be a backslid Christian," he teased, his eyes glowly warmly.

"Oh, I am. I was," she replied easily. "But I have come to my senses," she said, paraphrasing the moment of repentance of the prodigal son.

Inside the sanctuary, the piano called the children from playing outside with "Jesus loves me, this I know."

"After you, Miss Budge," the preacher said, holding the door open that led to the sanctuary.

The church lady passed through, resisting the impulse to curtsy, for she was a great admirer of preachers and could rarely find a way to express that. As she passed him, she began to sing with the other worshipers who were already standing in front of their regular places, their mouths wide open, as their hearts spilled out in the declaration that joined them in a truer fellowship than cobbler or hot coffee, "Jesus loves me – this I know."

Daphne Simpkins (DaphneSimpkins@Prodigy.net) has been writing "The Adventures of Mildred Budge" for the past two years. Before she became Miss Budge's biographer, she wrote a memoir of her father's journey through Alzheimer's disease: The Long Good Night.

September recipes

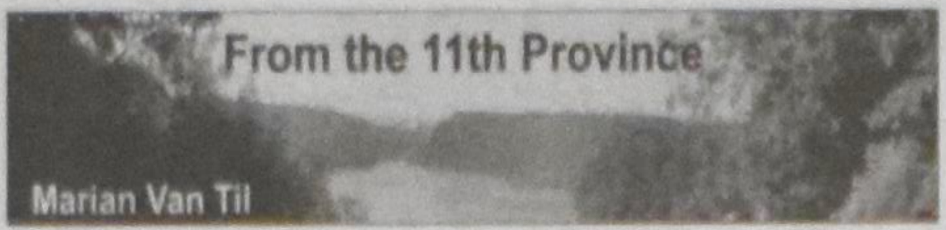
Dutch apple cake

4-5 large apples, peeled and sliced
5 Tbsp sugar
2 tsp cinnamon
Preheat overn to 350F. Combine apples with sugar and cinnamon, and set aside.
3 cups flour
2 ½ cups sugar
1 tsp salt
Sift dry ingredients together.
1/3 cup orange juice
1 cup oil
4 eggs
2 ½ Tbsp vanilla
Mix these ingredients together, then add to dry. Pour half of the batter into a greased tube pan. Add half of the apples, then cover with the remaining batter. Decorate the top with the rest of the apples. Bake for approximately 1 ½ hours. Cool for 15 minutes, then invert.

Homemade Chai

5 cups water
Bring the water to a boil.
2 tsp whole cloves
2 tsp crushed green cardamom pods
4 sticks cinnamon
10 slices fresh ginger, thinly cut
Add the spices and reduce the heat. Boil on low for 25 minutes.
1 ½ tsp black tea
Add the tea and allow to steep for five minutes.
1 cup whole milk
3 Tsp honey
Add milk and honey and bring the tea to a boil again. Strain and serve.
The base tea (without the milk) will keep well refrigerated for several days.
(History of Honey)

Reflections



'Diversity' in the church

Last month the Christian Reformed Church synod discussed "diversity." The impetus came from racial and ethnic "concerns heard through the back door," according to Rev. Paul De Vries, chair of a committee examining the issue. Perhaps whoever raised the issue didn't know that there are "church-orderly" ways to bring concerns before the entire church. But the message was received by some means since synod did discuss it this year.

The issue: there aren't enough racial/ethnic minority church members in CRC leadership positions. De Vries was quoted by the Synod News Office: "The major discussion … revolved around the topic of including ethnically diverse people in guiding the mission of the CRC. The current structure of the denomination doesn't adequately address the fundamental concerns regarding advancement of people of color at all levels of congregational and denominational life."

Some delegates were uneasy with the adoption of racial quotas that this new vision of leadership *could* lead to. I share that disquiet. That equally unjust system is no way to appoint leaders in Christ's church, and does not, as step one, acknowledge and implore the work of the Spirit in bringing forward Godly leaders suited to particular tasks the Spirit has for them and for this part of the worldwide church. In the end synod called for a plan that would "increase ethnically diverse leadership." An "ethnically-inclusive group" will "develop a vision for diversifying senior leadership" and bring it to next year's synod.

For decades the CRC has been trying to make itself more hospitable for black, brown, red and yellow church members. I can't speak knowledgeably to how well that has gone, nor can I enumerate the current efforts. I do know that as a woman I've been frustrated in years past by what I saw as an old boys' network in denominational leadership. So I empathize with those who feel racially marginalized in the church. (I'm not talking about the church offices. There is room for varied biblical interpretation there.)

A moot point

The diversity talk seemed meant to raise awareness in the minds and *hearts* of those of us who are part of the white, Dutch-descended majority about non-white and non-Dutch CRC members and their legitimate place in the church – a working toward "unity in diversity." That should be a moot point if every CRC congregation and those running the church institution take the gospel seriously and make sure it is preached every Sunday in its biblical and Reformational fullness. When that happens the Spirit is there, at work, and hard hearts (of all colors) change.

Isn't that happening? If not, why not? Paul told the Galatians, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28). Christ and only Christ brings that kind of unity to those who follow him. Race, gender and social status fall away when all confess *and obey* Jesus as LORD. That doesn't mean there aren't some things to work out, including how we find ways to worship together in bi- or multiethnic congregations. (Was keeping silent the magnificent pipe organ at synod devotions in the Trinity College chapel, except to accompany one hymn all week, a good example of "diversity"?)

Oneness in Christ means that our race, ethnicity, social status, gender and subculture are not of ultimate or even intermediate importance when we are part of that great cloud of witnesses, here and in heaven, which exalt the holy name of God enthroned. That's why I think there is now too much emphasis on "diversity." That over-emphasis comes from the secular world and is being adopted by the Church of Jesus Christ. That's dangerous. A church cannot successfully take a word that has certain connotations in our broader culture and redefine it.

Emphasizing differences

"Diversity" in secular culture emphasizes differences, not unity. In fact, it relishes, even glories in, differences, though secular people claim that unity is what they strive for. Plaintive cries of "Can't we all just get along?" are often heard. No, we can't. Not apart from the Spirit and grace of God. In order for those apart from Christ to get along they must assume that every diverse part of the whole is as legitimate as every other part. They must be "tolerant," inoffensively refusing to take a principled stand or voice an opinion which conflicts with somebody else's. Doing that even while emphasizing race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality results in a strange, unworkable mix.

Equality of race and the complementariness of male and female are God-created; we denigrate them at our peril. The world says that all faiths and their cultural expressions are also equal. But from God's perspective there can be no equality of "diverse" faiths, philosophies, worldviews, their cultural expressions and lifestyles. He is God and his Son is the Savior of the world. There is none other.

It is apparently easy for a church to drift into, then embrace, secular "diversity": it has happened to the mainline Protestant churches, here and in Europe (though certainly not in all parishes within them, thanks be to God) and in parts of the Catholic Church. As those churches show, "diversity" then trumps the gospel. Let's pray that the Christian Reformed Church will be spared from that broad but treacherous path.

Marian Van Til lives in Youngstown, NY, with her husband, Ed Cassidy, and five cats. She is music director of a Lutheran church and her second book, a whimsical look at living with cats, will be out later this year. Her blog, Reformed Revelry, is at: <www.reformedrevelry.wordpress.com>

An immigrant family experiences food

Coby Veenstra

Our family arrived in Orangeville, ON from Holland in 1950, just weeks before my fifth birthday. My father's sponsor/employer had gone all out to provide these newbies with a real Canadian meal. There were bowls and platters on the table with food that no one recognized. My mother did what she always did at home – dish out the servings. The yellow chicken feed (corn) turned out to be quite tasty. What I later learned were hamburgers were delicious, since meat had not been on our table too frequently. There were some other vegetables, which, under my mother's eagle eye, we ate in decent portions. Then there was a bowl of some nameless vegetable, which mom also dished up in generous fashion. Each of us kids coughed and gagged at the foul taste, but the ever-watching eagle eye guaranteed that all was eaten politely with no groans or bad faces. Weeks later we learned the stuff was *relish*, meant to spread on the hamburgers. I still feel the nausea when I think back.

Even dating back to our days in Holland, meat was a rare treat. We got a small portion on Sunday, a smaller portion on Monday if we were lucky, and on Wednesday the last of the gravy. As in many immigrant families, that was it for the week. Then one day, my mother discovered **wieners**.

Cheap and so many in a package! So the next Wednesday, my mother carefully cut one wiener

Coby Veenstra (cobyveenstra@hotmail.com) is a retired teacher who lives in St. Catharines, Ontario

What happened to my good intentions?

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Do you recognize this pattern in your life? I observe it in mine. When I see a picture of a starving child, I resolve to send a gift to an aid organization. But, for some reason, I don't.

Or, I read about rising world food prices, and I long for justice. I decide to pray that the poor won't be crushed by unjust, rich and powerful people. But, for some reason, I don't.

Or, I hear a sermon urging Christians to grow in generosity, and I determine to become more grateful and generous. But, for some reason, I don't.

The apostle Paul encountered a similar scenario when the Corinthian Christians decided to help the Jerusalem Christians, impoverished due to famine. The Corinthians had begun with enthusiasm, but troubles in the church had bogged down the project, and it never came to fruition. Pointing to the example of generous Macedonian Christians toward the Jerusalem church, Paul urged the Corinthians to finish the work of giving that they had begun: "Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have" (2 Corinthians 8:11-12).

How did Paul spur them on? He explained the reason for the Macedonians' success: "They gave themselves first to the Lord " (2 Corinthians 8:5b). Linked to God's grace, their attitudes and actions reflected his generosity, and depended on his power, not on their own good intentions, to accomplish the task.

Each day, remember that God's "divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3a). All our good intentions of giving, praying, and growing in gratitude and generosity can be brought to fruition as we rely on him.

It seemed like biblical times

Bert Witvoet

When you travel to distant countries and end up eating with the locals, you often have to adjust your taste buds, if not your sense of smell and sight. No matter how much faith you pack in your suitcase, you can't always make the transition without the gag impulse. How would you like a handful of baked caterpillars or a couple of crunchy locusts?

Alice and I have been tested only a few times while we stayed with the Venda people in the Limpopo province of South Africa, mainly because they adjusted their cooking to our style of eating, I think. But there was that time this year when we were invited to a tombstone ceremony that included slaughtering a cow on the premises and eating the meat a few hours later.

A solemn occasion

Some 75 descendants of a grandmother and great-grandmother who had passed away 29 years ago had come together to place a tombstone on her grave. Had they been neglectful to wait for such a long time? Not really. It was the custom in olden days to bury deceased people on their own property and to mark the graves with a few natural stones. But those days have passed. South African law forbids the practice of burying dead people just anywhere. They must be buried in cemeteries, and their graves should be marked with identifying text. The usual day for funerals in South Africa is a Saturday so that relatives can come from distant places and take part in what is often a day-long affair. So it's common now to see 50 funerals taking place on a Saturday at a large cemetery, especially because of AIDS.

This particular family who had invited us to witness their event wanted to make an adjustment to modern times. They didn't want to rebury their mother and grandmother, but they wanted to have a decent tombstone placed on her grave. The Venda people have a strong urge to honour their ancestors. But that was not all. There would be a simple ceremony of the unveiling of the tombstone, followed by a festive dinner. For that occasion, the only surviving son of the deceased, who was unable to attend himself, had given permission to his family to slaughter one of his cows.

A delicate operation

When we arrived at the site where it all was to take place, the cutting open of the cow was in full swing. The air was heavy with the bland smell of warm blood, steaming intestines and fresh dung. The cow was lying on her back, and the guts were spilling out all over. The skin had become a carpet for the carcass. Bessy had already been decapitated, and her head was lying not too far from her hind legs. Two or three persons were wielding a sharp knife, and I noticed that the content of the colon was situated dangerously close to the fresh meat. Both attracted a lot of flies.

Once large hunks of meat had been separated from the animal, like a rump or a leg, they were transported in a wheelbarrow to a large block of wood. There, someone with an axe started to hack away at these body parts, and large slabs of meat were separated from bones or ribs. These slabs were then put in a pail of water, where they were rinsed. Then a few women started to cut these slabs into smaller chunks. No finely cut steaks or roasts evolved from the process – only chunks that defied description. One more rinsing of these chunks of meat followed, and then the meat was dropped into a large cauldron with boiling water. These were the same cauldrons that a few hours earlier had been used for cooking corn porridge (miliepap). After two hours of cooking the meat, the women signalled that the feast could begin.

A fitting souvenir

Alice and I got a generous portion of porridge, sauce and meat. We ate with our fingers, of course. When in Venda country, do as the Venda people. How did the food taste? Not bad. The meat was a bit tough because the cow that had been sacrificed was advanced in cow years. I know. I took home with me the horns of this cow, and they show a lot of scars. About those horns – I had wrapped them in a plastic bag and had carried them in my carry-on suitcase on our way back to Canada. When I opened the case in our bedroom, I was greeted by a significant stench from the decaying marrow inside the horns, and there were maggots crawling all over my personal goods. I didn't prepare them for consumption. But the sight and smell brought back memories. Maggots belong to funerals, don't you think?

Actually, I was glad that we had been part of this solemn and joyful occasion. Eating meat that had just been slaughtered reminded me of the stories we read in the Bible. A few unannounced guests arrive, and the fatted calf is slaughtered and prepared in a matter of hours. We in the West are too squeamish and too far removed from the source of our food to appreciate the wholesomeness of eating a cow that a few hours earlier had welcomed the day with loud mooing.

Soup for Gloria

Downtown Portland.
We order a hot dog
with mustard and ketchup.
You always add relish.
Sit down and both notice
a brown wizened face under a straw hat
long black shawl over layers of clothing.
"Bag lady" you say quietly to your
country sister.
You go back to ask her if she would like
some food,
stand in line
and bring her a bowl of soup.
Shortly she approaches with a quarter
and a request for cheese
and you stand in line again.
Then you eat your hotdog.
I've finished mine already.
You want a name for her
so you can pray for her
and I say Gloria off the tip of my tongue
because your action stirs mixed
emotions in me
even though you thought it
ordinary.

Linda Siebenga

Classifieds

Birthday

July 20, 1929 – Dantumawoude, Friesland

With thankfulness to God for his goodness and continued blessings, we celebrate the **80th Birthday** of our husband, father and Pake

Wietze Zuidema

With love and best wishes:
Wife: Tettje
Children & grandchildren:
Florence & John –
Justin & Lori, Jordan, Jonathan, Meghan
Gary & Fran – Trina, Luke, Tessa, Nathan
Annette & Cliff – Quinton
John & Carolyn – Shaun, Tyler, Brandon
Brian & Liz
Diana & Art
Wayne & Tara

An **Open House** will be held on Saturday, July 25 from 2:00 - 5:00 p.m. at: Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church 607 Dynes Road, Burlington, Ontario

Best wishes only

Address: 805-700 Dynes Rd, Burlington ON L7N 3M2

Anniversaries

1944 Meerkerk - *July 13* - 2009 Brampton

With thankfulness to God for his faithfulness, we celebrate the **65th Anniversary** of our parents

Dirk and Rie Jongkind

With love and best wishes: Nenke & Rob; Jake & Marion; Emie & Adriana; Adam & Judy; Scott & Marisa; Judy & Alan 10 grandchildren & 10 great-grandchildren There will be a family celebration.

Home address: Dirk & Rie Jongkind
Faith Manor 105-7900 McLaughlin Rd S, Brampton ON L6Y 5A7

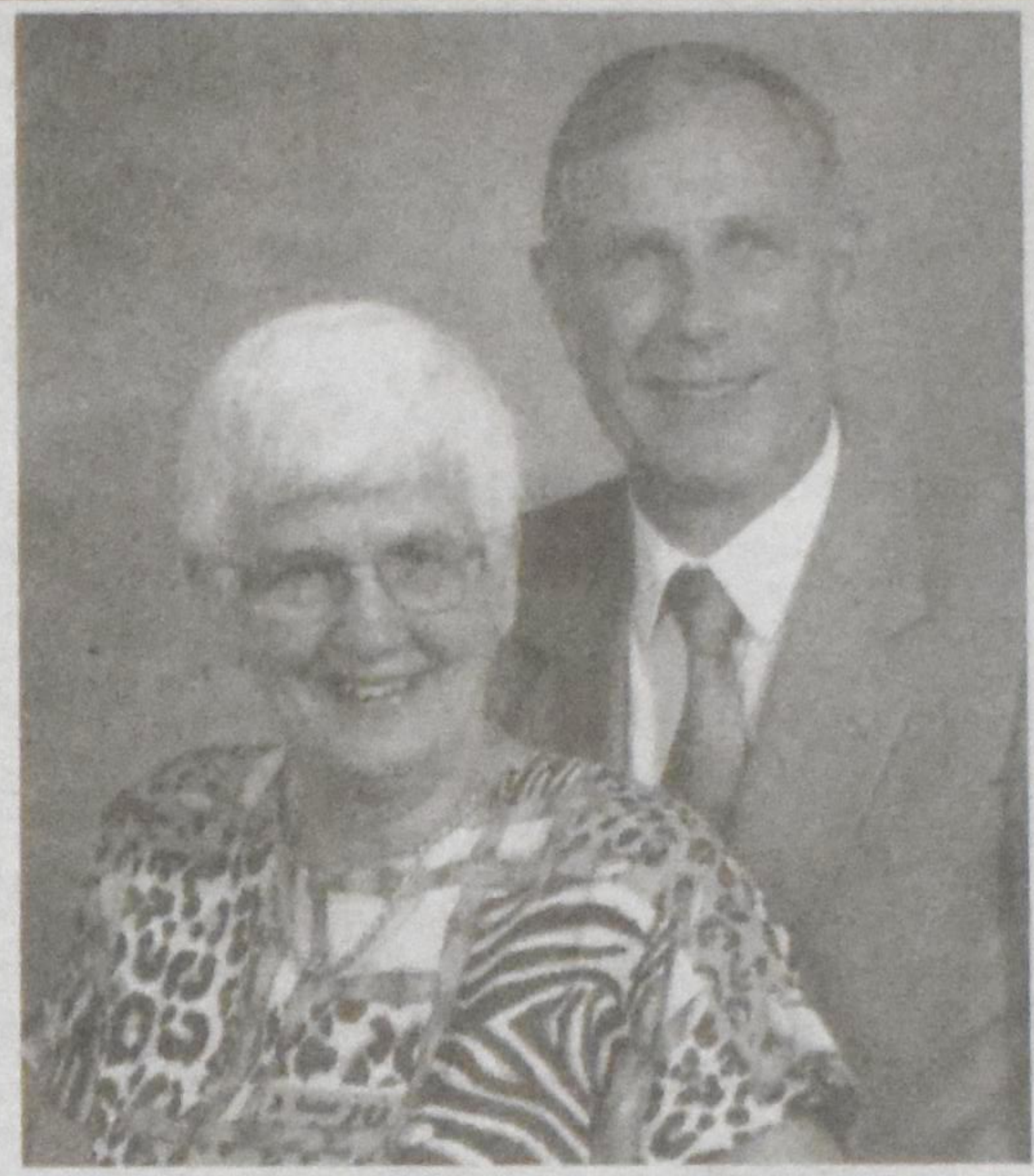
Gerald and Susan Bruulsema

July 2, 1954 - July 2, 2009

We are very happy and thankful to announce the **55th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents, gradparents and great-grandparents. Through their lives and testimony, we have seen God's faithfulness, goodness and mercy.

With love and congratulations from
Ann & George Lunshof, *Dunnville ON*
Jo-anne & Richard Ogle, *Edmonton AB*
Betty & Adam Roesch, *Dunnville ON*
and 7 grandchildren and
2 great-grandchildren

Home address: 415 Crown Road
Dunnville ON N1A 2W5



Thank you

We want to thank every one who sent us the best wishes and the Lords Blessings on the ocasion of our 50th wedding celebration. And we Janet & Tony thank our Heavenly Father who has blessed us for so many years.

Janet & Tony Mohle

Anniversaries

Clinton 1959 July 3rd 2009 Caledonia

With joy and thankfulness to the Lord, we are pleased to announce the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents,

Jack and Tina Sytsma (nee **Geertsma**)

May the Lord bless them in the years to come.

Best wishes and lots of love from Michael & Grace Koopman & their children Dennis, Jacquelynne and Brett (*Stoney Creek*)

On July 11, 2009, an **Open House** will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. in the York CRC, 33 King Street, York, Ontario

Home address for best wishes is:
10-40 Breamar Ave, Caledonia ON N3W 2N1

1959 July 18 2009

With praise and thanksgiving to God

Harvey and Sita Broersma (nee **Poot**)

celebrate with their children and grandchildren their **50th Wedding Anniversary** on July 18, 2009

Marilyn & Peter VanDelden – Nicole, Christina, Steven, David
Jaymes Broersma – Zoe
Betty & Rob Brouwer – Thomas and Kate
Don & Karen Broersma – Scott and Robyn
Sharon & Albert Devries – Josh and Anna

Home address: 34 Nelson St W, Bowmanville ON L1C 1E3

Guelph, ON August 8, 1959 — Brockville, ON August 8, 2009

Tony and Tena Alblas (nee **Top**)

Are thankful to God for **50** years of marriage

With love from your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchild:
Sylvia & John Hogeveen, *Manotick, ON*
Melissa & Mike (Kaleigh),
Steve, Kevin, Kristianna
John & Dawn Alblas, *Kempville, ON*
James, Dan, Chris, Amanda
Ed & Annette Alblas, *Grimsby, ON*
Tim, Nathan, Mariah
Rod & Collette Alblas, *Alliston, ON*
Antonie, Katrina, Sebastian

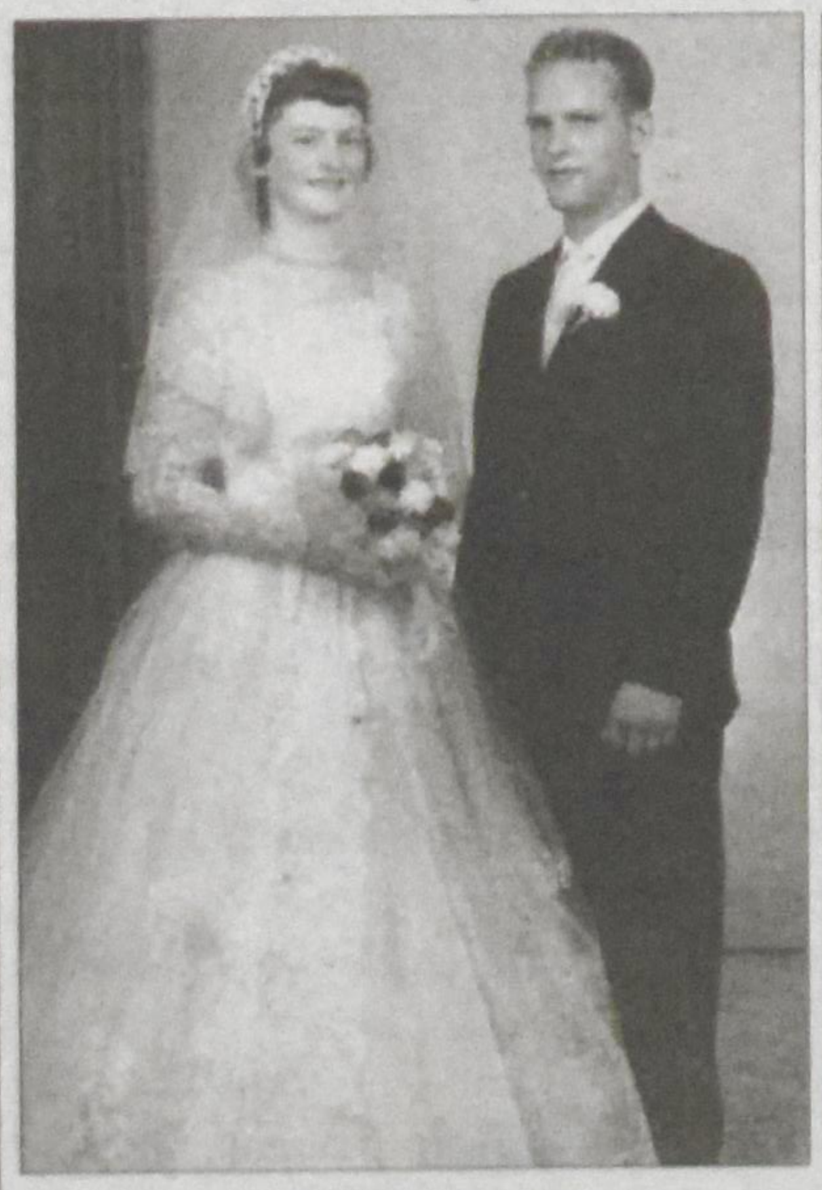
Celebrations with an **Open House** will be taking place with family and friends August 8, 2009 from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. at Bethel Christian Reformed Church 117 Windsor Drive, Brockville Ontario

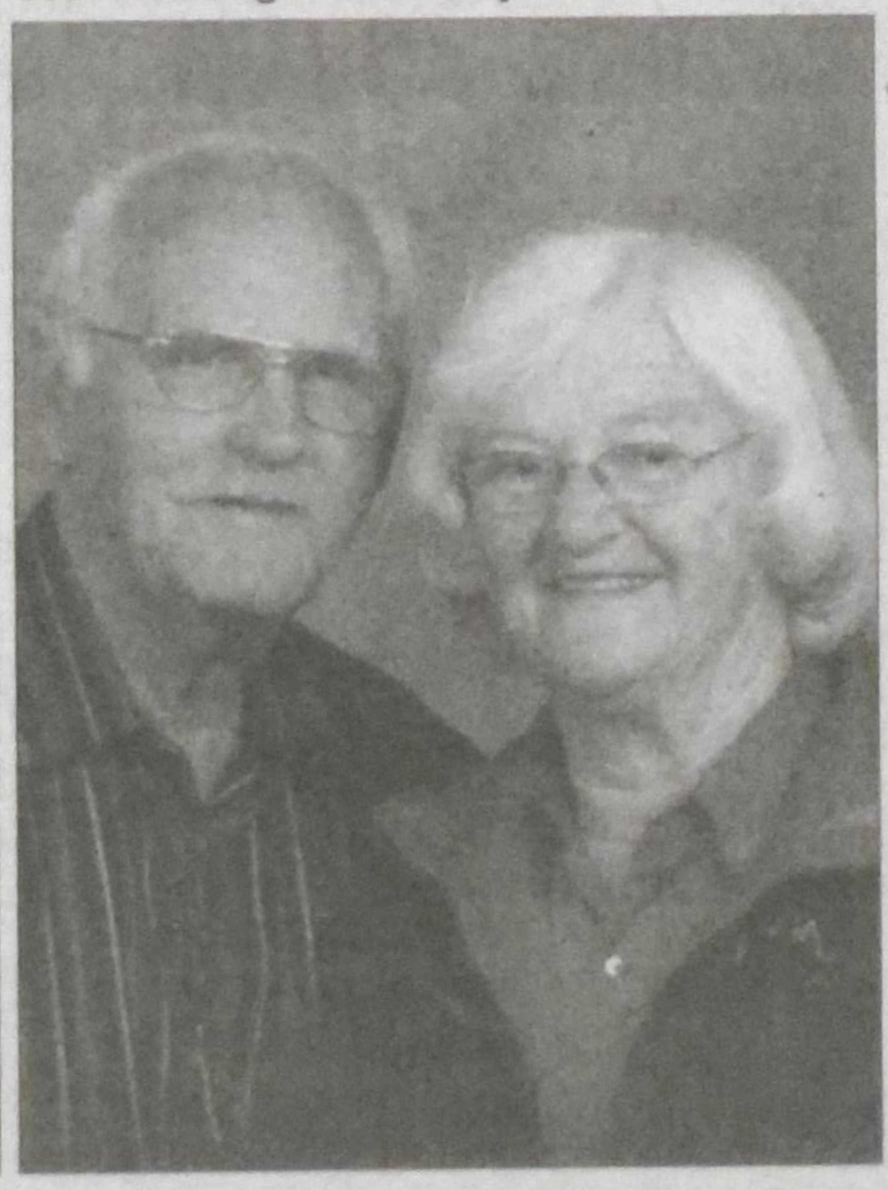
Home address: 1359 Linden Cres,
Brockville ON K6V 6B5

July 18, 1959 — July 18, 2009

Peter and Coby Veltman (nee **DeGroot**)

Congratulations on your **50th Wedding Anniversary**





"The Lord has truly blessed us with 50 wonderful years of marriage."

May the Lord bless you with many more! – Love, Your Family

Correspondence: Peter & Coby Veltman, 7 Forestview Drive, Huntsville ON P1H 1G2

Sneek 1949 July 29 Barrie 2009

I will carry you. Isaiah 46:4

With thanksgiving to our gracious God for his enduring faithfulness, we joyfully announce the **60th Wedding Anniversary** of our beloved parents and grandparents

Jelle and Aafke Groen (nee **Pel**)

Congratulations and love from:
Janice & Jim Minturn – Joel, Kate, Allen and Chalena, *Strathmore, Alberta*
Al & Caroline Groen – Jeremiah, Karla & Amber, *Richmond Hill, Ont.*
Rose & Ed Smit, *Brampton, Ont.*
John & Janet Groen – Joshua, Rachel, Elena, *Calgary AB*

All are welcome to an **Open House** on July 29 between 1:30-3:30 p.m. at Tollendale Village, 282 Hurst Drive, Barrie Ontario

Address: 214-282 Hurst Dr, Barrie ON L4N 0Z3

Room & Board

Room and board available for student in Christian home. **Welland** area, close to Niagara College.
Please call **905-732-6957**

Holiday accomodation in Holland with vehicle rentals and tours. **www.chestnutlane.nl**

To place an anniversary or obituary, email rose@christiancourier.ca or mail to: Christian Courier, 5 Joanna Dr St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1

Travel /For Sale /Jobs

Obituaries

Hannah Gietema (nee **Beuckens**)

July 31, 1926 June 13, 2009
Friesland, NL Abbotsford, BC

On June 13, surrounded by her family, Hannah went on to her heavenly home.

She loved her husband, family and life on the farm in Sumas Prairie. Above all, she loved the Lord.

She will be missed by her husband Fred of 57 years, and her children:
Gertie & John Fictorie, *Abbotsford, BC*
Ann & Carl Van Harten, *Orangeville, ON*
Helene & Ken Vanderveen, *Abbotsford, BC*
Sharon & Ed Vandenberg, *Abbotsford, BC*
Harv & Brigitte Gietema, *Abbotsford, BC*
Evelyn & Eric Van Egmond, *Abbotsford, BC*
Ruby & Enno Meijers, *Barrie, ON*
Debbie & Ed Groot, *Smithers, BC*
She will also be missed by her 40 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.

2 Corinthians 4:16 - 18

Correspondence: Fred Gietema
34161 Walnut Ave
Abbotsford BC V2S 2S8

July 5, 1914 June 16, 2009

The Lord took home to himself our dear mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother

Jennigien van Schubert

passing away peacefully after a short hospitalization at Credit Valley Health Centre.

Her joy was her God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, in whom she lived everyday. Her favourite scripture was Psalm 121
I raise up my eyes to the hills,...
My help comes from the Lord,
the maker of heaven and earth.
and was her guide for her life. She lived unselfishly out of that strength through God's grace and in service to others.

Pre-deceased by her husband of 43 years, Robertus, and two great-grandchildren, Holly and Zachary.

Her love for her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren was incomparable, and she considered each one a blessing.
Survived by her children:
Betty & William Laman, *Hamilton, ON*
Robert & Judy van Schubert, *Nanaimo, BC*
Albert & Els van Schubert, *Barrie, ON*
John & Ann van Schubert, *Cambridge, ON*
Martin & Susan van Schubert, *London, ON*
Henry & Maureen van Schubert, *Barrie, ON*
and 16 grandchildren & 30 great-grandchildren.

Revelations 1:4-6

Correspondence: 501-237 King St W
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Qualified candidates should forward a resume and cover letter with salary expectations to: Mr. Ron Vahrmeyer, Chair
Shalom Manor Foundation
12 Bartlett Avenue, Grimsby ON L3M 4N5

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We wish to thank all applicants for their interest and effort in applying for this position. However, only candidates selected for interviews will be contacted.

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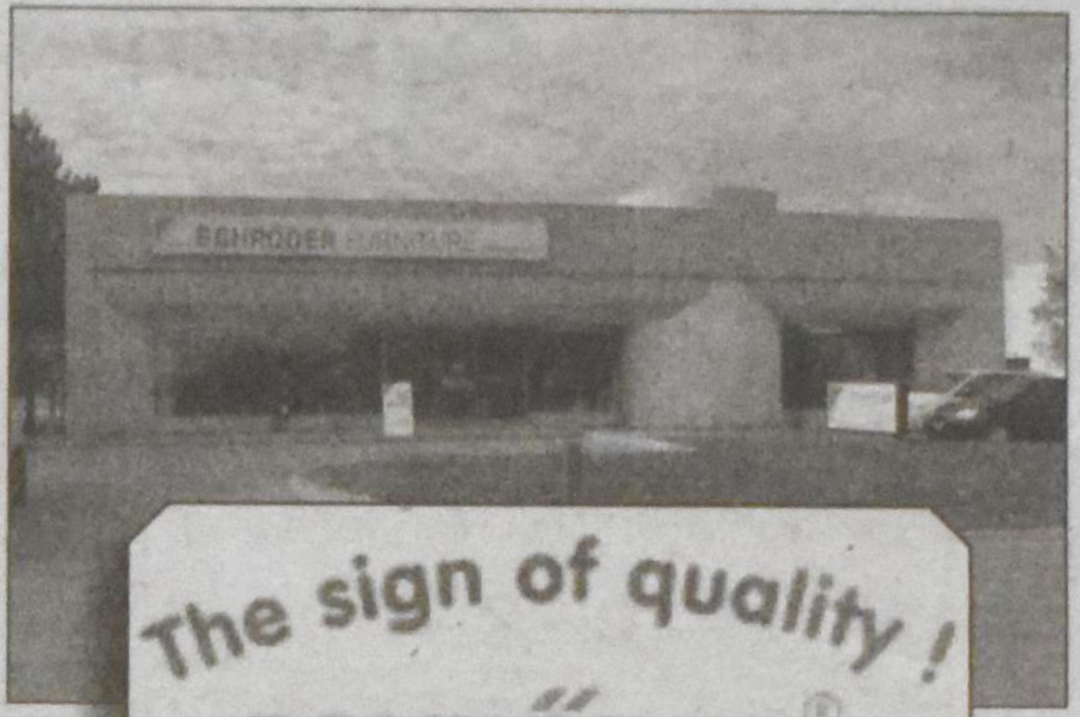

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 12 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Henry R. DeBolster will be preaching.

Oct 3 The next Netherlands Bazaar will be held in the Thornhill Community Centre, 7755 Bayview Ave. in **Thornhill**, Ontario

Nov 20 Christian Festival Concert at 7:30 pm at the Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto. Call 416-636-9779 or email landmkooy@rogers.com More in details in upcoming issues.

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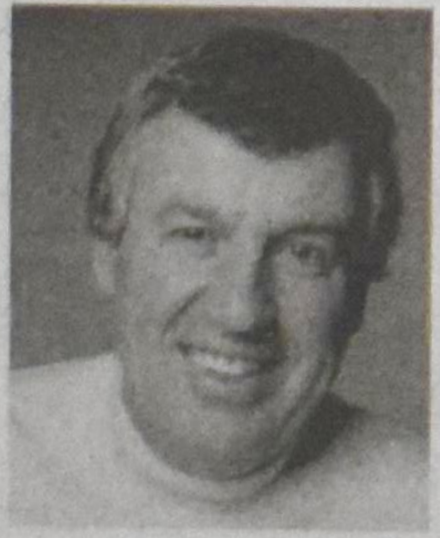

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News

Eat Well Food Tour raises important questions

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"What we choose to eat is never just a neutral choice," Kirstin Vander Giessen-Reitsma said in an interview with the *Grand Rapids Press* on June 20. "What we choose supports certain systems or certain ways of doing things, whether we're aware of them or not."

That perpective is what motivated Vander Giessen-Reitsma and her husband, Rob, to plan a six-week tour across six states and parts of Canada this summer. The Vander Giessen-Reitsmas are founding members of Culture is Not Optional (or *cino), a non-profit educational organization "encouraging all-of-life faith practice." Now, *cino has paired up with the Christian Reformed Office of Social Justice for the *Eat Well Food Tour*.

Here are some excerpts from their travel logs so far:

Demotte, Indiana

The first official stop on the tour was Perkins' Wholesome Harvest Farm. Just last year, Dan and Julie Oudman-Perkins bought a 19-acre farm. We saw the beautiful old milk shed, which is a simple building that seems to have captured Dan and Julie's imaginations as they dream about what its potential might be. A bakery, perhaps? It's incredible how four walls and a roof can beckon creativity and possibility. —Kirstin

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Holly Bechiri has a great post over at CRC Justice Seekers called "Foraging in the middle of miniscrapers" in which she reflects about a recent berry-picking excursion in the middle of Grand Rapids, Michigan. It's been interesting along our tour to talk to people about all of the space in the middle of urban and suburban areas that goes uncultivated. Two of the churches we've visited have discussed what it might look like to use some of the land around their buildings for community gardens. What might it look like if we all attempted to grow a bit of the food we eat on land we steward? *—Rob*

Sheboygan, Wisconsin

– Oostburg Christian Reformed Church holds a food drive on the first Sunday of every month. The Sunday before, there's an announcement about what the [local food] pantry needs and the following Sunday, the congregation responds with gifts out of their abundance. *—Kirstin*

South Holland, Illinois

A member of Peace Christian Reformed Church, Mary is involved in something called Soul Food. Basically, people get together in the church kitchen for an evening to make a simple meal in a large batch. One week, it might be chicken soup and banana bread; another, chili and corn bread. The group divides the prepared food into individual servings in re-used containers, labels the containers and puts them in the church freezer. People in the church who know others in need of food or a gesture of care in a difficult time – or themselves are in need – are free to grab homemade meals from the freezer at any time. I love how this project provides good, wholesome food for people who are hungry, sick or grieving, while also creating a community of friendship and creativity around the preparation of the food itself. *—Kirstin*

On the road again

I spent more hours than I should have looking for a new travel coffee mug when the one I'd had for years finally succumbed. I had a lot of criteria: a mug that would seal well enough not to leak in my bag and wasn't made of plastic, a mug that was fairly traded or made in the U.S. and at a price that wouldn't break the bank. Ha. I never did find the perfect option in all of my searching, so one day, as I got ready for work, I took an old hole-y sock, cut off the top and put it on a plain old canning jar – voila! A travel mug that's wonderfully reusable and replaceable. *—Kirstin*

Rob and Kirstin will hold workshops, conduct interviews and engage in discussion with people interested in the relationship between food and faith. They are stopping at whole food stores, organic farms, greenhouses, markets and churches (see **eatwellfoodtour.com** for upcoming events and locations).

www.sudoku-puzzles.net Sudoku 9x9 - Medium (133506530)

1		6		5				
			8				9	
	3			2		4		
3		7	4		8	1		
	8						7	
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	1				6			
				9		7		5

Odds and Trends

Angela Reitsma Bick

Hold the burger – until later

Michael Pollan, author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food*, writes thoughtfully on the implications of our current food systems. His incredibly detailed analyses have been summed up in three phrases: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."

A food writer for the *NY Times* has decided to half-heartedly follow Pollan's advice, or at least that's what it sounds like. Mark Bittman has become a part-time vegan – eating only fruits, vegetables and whole grains during the day, then splurging on the food he loves at dinner. Bittman is confident that reducing our dependence on processed foods is better for our bodies and the planet. His theory, fully explained in a new book called *Food Matters: A Guide to Conscious Eating*, has become so popular that its followers call themselves VB6: Vegans before 6. Like most compromises, however, this one pleases almost no-one: vegans scoff, meat-lovers laugh, and PETA is (for some unfathomable reason) furious.

Man's best friend has new job

Eight-year-old Riley Mers has a scar from where a peanut shell slipped into her sandal at the park, burning her skin like acid. She's gone into severe allergic reaction so many times that she started taking her grade three courses online, and rarely went out in public. Then a woman from Texas changed Riley's life.

Sharon Perry used to train dogs to search for narcotics. At the request of a friend, she tried teaching a dog to sniff out peanuts, then peanut residues, then oils. With her success, allergic children may be freed from the fear that accompanies them in so many situations. This is good news for the 1.5 million people in North America with life-threatening food allergies, including Riley.

With the help of Rock-o, one of Perry's dogs, Riley is now able to function more normally. The dogs are trained to accompany their owners everywhere, and to "discreetly scan guests for peanut residue." Anything from lotions to library books can be the source of a potential allergic reaction, so the dogs must be constantly alert. It costs $10,000 to train one dog, and takes one year. "It might look to you like it's a kid playing with a dog," said Riley's mother, Sherry Mers. "To me, that's a dog that's saving my daughter's life while they're playing."